The Star

Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

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اسبوعية سياسية مستقلة

The Star
Jordan's political, economic and cultural weekly

Presents its warmest wishes to
His Majesty King Hussein
and the Jordanian people on the occasion of
Eid Al Adha.

The Star will not appear next Thursday.
The next issue will be published on 9 May.

Restaurant
FOOD WITHOUT FEAR
TURINO
Full Dinner with Salad, Soft Drinks & Coffee

Pasta Carnival	JD10
Skewer Line Menu	JD12
Seafood & Shrimp Menu	JD13

Sweifiyeh - 683944

Diplomatic flurry deadlocked as Israel continues shelling

BEIRUT; DAMASCUS (Agencies)—While Israel's bombardment of Lebanese towns and villages entered its third successive week, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, on the fifth day of his Middle East shuttle mission, has gone into talks with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad after failing to see the president Tuesday. "Today is a new day," his spokesman said, "yesterday was a bad one."

In a brief arrival statement, Christopher expressed hope his attempts to negotiate a ceasefire in southern Lebanon may soon be successful.

It's very important to provide some stability, some security for civilians on both sides of the border, he said.

Mr Christopher is trying to get agreement among Syria, Lebanon and Israel on an American proposed one-page statement to restore calm to the Israeli-Lebanese border and to make sure new conflicts do not break out again. He has brought President Assad Israeli comments on the paper.

That had been Mr Christopher's intention on Tuesday, but he was informed shortly after his arrival that President Assad could not see him. A further plan to visit Beirut for a meeting with Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri was called off at the last minute because of American security concerns.

Israeli attacks on Beirut led Christopher to call off the trip to Beirut, just 5 minutes before his scheduled departure, a spokesman for the official said Tuesday.

Christopher was warned by the supreme allied commander in Europe that the city and surrounding areas were unsafe. Christopher had planned to fly from Damascus to Larnaca, Cyprus, then board a US army helicopter to fly to Beirut.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Shara had an unusual brief news conference at the airport Wednesday to deny any problems between the United States and Syria.



Christopher: Snubbed

"Secretary Christopher is always welcome in Damascus and the stories in the media which were trying to say something impolite in relations between Secretary Christopher and Syria, all these stories are without any foundation, they are baseless," Al Shara said.

American officials believe the explanation for the snub Tuesday could have been fatigue on the part of President Assad. The 65-year old leader has been holding shorter meetings than usual this week with the Secretary of State and he appeared tired to observers Tuesday night when he did appear 90 minutes late for a state dinner for Pakistani Prime minister Benazir Bhutto. It was the third time in four days that Assad had forced Christopher to cool his heels, in what seemed to be a gesture of humiliation. On two earlier occasions, Assad made Christopher wait a couple of hours while he held court with Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov.

After seeing Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres twice Tuesday morning in Jerusalem, Christopher flew to Damascus eager to get Syrian responses to Israeli ideas designed to push the American plan toward a final settlement. The proclaimed US goal is a written document that would halt the rocket and artillery fire between Israel and Lebanese Shiite guerrillas and prevent future attacks against civilian targets on both sides of the border.

Assad's decision not to see Christopher, whatever its explanation, served to underline Syrian reluctance to embrace the accord put forward by the United States and Israel. With 35,000 troops in Lebanon, Syria would be expected to enforce any restrictions on the Lebanese militia forces, despite's Assad's

Continued on page2

Bassam Abou-Sharif raconte sa lutte
A LIRE p. 12 dans LE JOURDAIN

Lebanon crisis highlights Jordanian-Syrian rift

By Ahmed Shaker
Special to The Star

JORDANIAN—SYRIAN relations have gone into a new phase of tension in the wake of the Israeli onslaught on Lebanon. Deputy Prime Minister Abdallah Nsour revealed this week that Prime Minister Abdel Karim Kabariti was not allowed to visit Lebanon recently. Sources said Syria had pressured the Lebanese to rebuff Mr Kabariti.

The diplomatic rift surfaced when senior Jordanian officials pointed to Syria's failure to protect Lebanon during the current crisis. This comes at a time when intensive contacts are being sought to end the Israeli offensive on Lebanon.

In his meeting, Tuesday, with members of the Upper House, His Majesty King Hussein said Jordan was deeply hurt by the events in Lebanon. He voiced Jordan's readiness to exert maximum effort to alleviate the suffering of the people of Lebanon and put an end to the bloodshed there.

The King pointed to the importance of Lebanon's independence, and of its people's right to sovereignty over their territory.

His Majesty denounced the Israeli aggression, and said that Israel is using force in a wrong manner, thus causing the loss of innocent civilian lives.

"But we are not the party which is supposed to be the protector of Lebanon and one which holds the prime responsibility for Lebanon," the King said.

Sources told *The Star* that Prime Minister Kabariti telephoned Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Al Hariri and Foreign Minister Faris Bouez on two separate occasions. He informed Mr Bouez that after he his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres he had some ideas which might help bring about a ceasefire. Mr Bouez reportedly told Mr Kabariti that he would pass the information to concerned Lebanese officials in order to fix a date for Mr Kabariti's visit to Beirut. But nothing materialized.

Informed sources pointed out that Syria maintains such exclusive control over the situation in Lebanon that all contacts between Beirut and other parties must first be cleared with the Syrians. The same sources explained that after Mr Kabariti's visit to Cairo, both Jordan and Egypt agreed to jointly

Continued on page2

Jordanians take to the streets to denounce Israeli attack on Lebanon

By Munther Hamdan
Special to The Star

ALL OVER the country, people are taking to the streets to demonstrate their condemnation of Israel's continued bombardment of Lebanon.

More than 2500 people participated Tuesday in one of the biggest demonstrations to take place in Jordan since the Gulf War. The downtown protest, called for political parties and professional associations, was preceded by a number of demonstrations in Irbid, Salt, Zarqa and at the University of Jordan.

Jordanians denounced Israel's shelling of civilians in Lebanon which claimed the lives of more than 150 people in two weeks. The Israeli attack elicited the strongest anti-Israel sentiments since the signing of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty less than two years ago.

Opposition parties and NGOs issued statements condemning the Israeli onslaught and called for an immediate end to the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty. Holding placards and shouting slogans, the protesters accused Israel of attempting to subjugate Arabs and imposing its political and military power on the region.

Last week Jordan witnessed intensive reactions to the attacks. Among these were the demonstration organized by the Jordanian Women's Union (JWU) in front of the Lebanese Embassy. "It is the least we can do to support Lebanon," Nadia Abu Falah, one of the participants, told *The Star*. She added that these reactions are still not up to the required standard.

The authorities, while keeping a watchful eye, did not attempt to interfere in the peaceful marches.

But observers commented on the small number of people participating in these demonstrations. Some accused the official Jordanian media, especially television, for not focusing much on the Israeli atrocities in Lebanon. Others put the blame on the government. "It is ironic that Israeli television gives full coverage of Arab reactions while our television keeps silent," said Lama Kheitan, a member of the JWU. "Before we prove to the world that we are a democracy, we must prove it to ourselves."



To express their indignation, protesters carried signs that bore statements such as "No peace with Zionist Nazis"; "We all stand in support for Lebanon: A land of Arabs and Muslims." Except for the banner which read "Kick the Israeli ambassador out of Amman," the slogans were to a great extent synonymous with those used in the past.

Politics was evidently mixed with feelings of anger, which opened the door to different interpretations of the situation in Lebanon. "Peace was made to stop the shedding of blood not to increase it," said Abu Falah.

The National Jordanian Committee in Support of the Lebanese People, recently formed, rejected all peace treaties from Camp David to Wadi Araba.

"There is an increasing awareness that peace is becoming a joke as it is not in harmony with people's needs," said Labeeb Kamhawi, a political analyst. "It was not until the world reacted sharply to the Lebanese situation that we decided to condemn Israel," he added.

Reactions were directed against the double standards of the Israelis. "While the killing of one or two Israelis shakes the international community, the slaughter of hundreds of Lebanese people, most of whom are innocent women and

Continued on page2

PNC meets to consider scrapping charter

By Marjorie Miller
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

GAZA CITY—At first glance, the gray-haired men swarming seaside Gaza in blazers and windbreakers and exchanging brotherly kisses look like Arab businessmen arriving at a trade show. They suck in their paunches, sit down to cigarettes and strong coffee and say how very good it is to meet again.

But these are no average conventioneers.

Rather, they are old-time guerrillas. And they have come to Yasser Arafat's Palestinian-ruled territory to vote whether to formally recognize Israel's right to exist.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres has demanded that the Palestine Liberation Organization eliminate all calls for the destruction of the Jewish state from its charter before entering final peace negotiations scheduled to begin 4 May, and Arafat has promised to deliver.

Despite mounting Palestinian anger over the two-month Israeli closure of Gaza and the West Bank, and over Israel's military offensive in southern Lebanon, Arafat is expected to get the votes he needs to change the PLO's constitution.

Last Monday, Arafat opened the first meeting of the PLO's long-standing parliament in exile—the Palestinian National Council—with an appeal to the members to recognize that peace is a give-and-take process.



All those in favor raise their hands

"I call upon your council to amend all the articles in the national charter which contradict 'the peace of the brave' that we signed," Arafat said. "I speak to you honestly when I say we cannot only take and not give. We respect our word and our commitment and we must act accordingly."

Many of the graying PLO members had just set foot in Palestine for the first time in decades, or even since childhood. Some, like Mohammed Abbas, the mastermind of the hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise liner, were teary-eyed and said they would support Arafat's appeal.

Abbas, 49, was emerging from hiding for the first time since the hijacking, in which guerrillas killed Jewish American passenger Leon Klinghoffer. Abbas apologized for the operation.

"My mentality has changed from military to political. The Achille Lauro was a mistake," Abbas said. He added, however, "the struggle of the Palestinian people should continue in the present and carry on into the future."

Others were not quite so moved. Tayseer Quba, the deputy chief of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, or PFLP, who was returning after a 28-year exile, said his

Continued on page2

No one's striking it rich off Brazil's new gold find

By Gabriel Escobar
LA Times-Washington Post News Srvice

SERRA PELADA, Brazil—Radar surveys, geochemical studies and samples of sediment sucked from the earth all show that buried just north and east of this poor town is a huge pot of gold—150 tons' worth. And that is proving very hard to live with.

"It is driving them crazy," said Maria Elena da Silva. "Look around you."

The Aunt, as this mother of 15 is known, nodded toward the sullen prospectors loitering in one dismal place or slouching toward the kitchen tent and another monotonous meal.

The memory of an earlier bonanza and its instant millionaires was vivid in their heads. But even though the newfound gold lies all around them, things are different now, and that is what frustrates them.

The Brazilian government has made clear that it is not sharing the gold. So, at least for now, the only pot for the prospectors is the one in which donated beans have been boiling all morning in the kitchen tent.

It is a far cry from what happened here in February 1980, when a gold strike did not disappoint the scores of desperate men who rushed to this once pristine corner of the Amazon basin and dug at will.

For the next 10 years, before the boom went bust, Serra Pelada set the standard for a distinctly Brazilian version of gold fever—a fabulous epic in which a penniless man dug up a 136-pound rock of solid gold and when another, the legendary Marlon Pids, measured his haul not in pounds, but in tons.

World Report

So comparatively well off was this town then that almost every person here, the Aunt included, has let gold slip through his or her fingers. "We thought it would never end," she explained.

And that too is hard to live with. Before the ground stopped giving and poverty set in, around 1991, about 44 tons of gold were pulled from the now barren pit at the edge of town. In 1983 alone, with thousands of men working, an astonishing 13 tons of gold were mined, a handful at a time.

But as gold ended, hope of another strike in the Amazon basin only increased. Now, after two years of surveys, Brazil's state-controlled conglomerate, Companhia Vale do Rio Doce, has announced that these rolling hills in the northeast state of Para, about 1,200 miles northwest of Rio de Janeiro, are concealing even more gold than they have yielded.

The news proved what these prospectors had long suspected. But no sooner was the announcement made than a fight over the rights to the gold broke out among the prospectors themselves, and between the prospectors and the Brazilian government.

If things go as planned, this moribund towns of 6,000 will soon find itself on the fringe of the largest gold mine in Latin America, and one of the largest in the world.

The realization that they are living in tantalizing proximity to at least $2 billion in buried treasure has had a profound effect on people who have been unable or unwilling to wean themselves off gold, hard-luck prospectors who subsist on gold dust and who now demand a share of the new bounty.

News of the new mine has agitated what the locals call loucura—the craziness brought on by gold fever. It is that symptom that has allowed them to survive in a town that looks like the derelict set of a spaghetti Western, a place where idling and daydreaming are full-time jobs.

Most of those who remained are too poor to leave, too driven by the hope, now more than confirmed, that gold has always been under their feet. Convincing them that they have no rights to the new mine, as the Brazilian government aims, seems an impossible task. To a person, they believe that 16 years of digging have earned them a moral, if not legal, right to the gold.

The campground, where a 24-hour vigil is kept, is just one sign of this determination. Three competing organizations representing prospectors vow that they will impede full-scale mining in the area until they get their share.

Between 22,000 and 44,000 miners are registered with different prospectors' associations, and although the groups themselves advocate peaceful protests, some prospectors say they will turn violent if the government tries to evict them.

"When gold ended, it all ended. I lost money. I lost time. I lost everything. Now we are waiting for this," said Aldemir Braiz do Nascimento, 61, a burly prospector who dug up a fortune in the 1980s.

If the prospectors speak confidently about their rights, it is because numerous Brazilian governments have found it impossible to say no to them. Even though the mining that broke out in 1980 was illegal—only Vale, the state-controlled mining company, has the rights to mineral exploration—the government at the time quickly yielded to public pressure and allowed the prospectors to work the pit and build a town.

That precedent, which convinced the miners that they had a right to the gold, has been reaffirmed over and over again. Deadlines to abandon the dig were ignored throughout the 1980s, casualties of political maneuvering that surrounded the issue. Minerals in Brazil are a national patrimony, and evicting the poor from this and other mines was difficult even when the military was in power.

Officials at Vale say there is no question that the company has all the rights to the gold. A government mining official here produced documents that chronicle the long struggle to evict the prospectors, each effort ending in frustration for both the mining ministry and Vale.

The new gold is said to lie at least 1,500 feet deep. One Vale official said a prospector with a pickax would not stand a chance of reaching it, even if he were given the opportunity. ■

Upon the Occasion of
EID Al-ADHA

ARAB BANK

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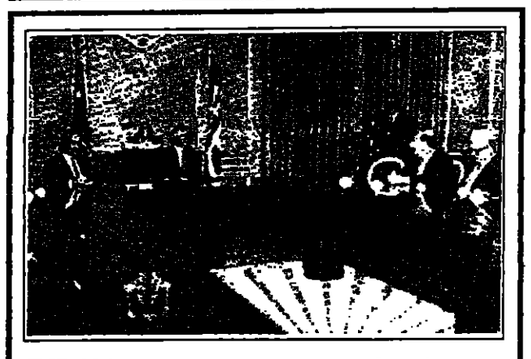
ARAB & ISLAMIC NATIONS

Its most cordial wishes and greetings



JORDAN WEEK

An unconventional report on Jordanian news and views edited by Marwan Al Asmar



■ His Majesty King Hussein has reiterated Jordan's support for the Palestinian people, stressing that Jordan had no ambitions in Palestinian land. Speaking to members of the Upper House of Parliament at the Royal Court Tuesday , the King said Jordan strongly rejects any attempt to be blamed for others' problems . He warned against external dangers posed to Jordan or any attempt to use Jordan as a stepping ground for threats directed against neighboring areas. Referring to events in Lebanon, the King said they were disturbing and painful. He said Jordan will support the Palestinians and their decisions under their leadership but stressed that "we have no ambitions nor do we have any secret motives." He added that "unfortunately we are still a target of sucpision by our brothers ... We have born with them far too much and matters have reach their limit."

the King said that comprehensive and lasting peace is our objective and it is our duty to help achieve this peace. He criticized Israel's use of force in Lebanon saying "the Israeli reaction can be frankly described as the worst kind of use of force which will not acheive any results." The King expressed concern about the situation in Iraq. "We seek to create the opportunity for the Iraqis to meet and to chart plans for their future. But we reject any attempt to harm Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity." The meeting was attended by HRH Crown Prince Hassan.

Mjalli for Lawyers Association

■ The nationalists have regained control of the Jordanian Lawyers Association (JLA). In last week's election, Hussein Mjalli, a former parliamentary deputy, became president of the JLA. He received 829 votes in the second round of the ballot. The Islamists, led by Saleh Al Armouti, gained only 806 votes. However, Jawad Younis, Leith Shbeilat's lawyer, got only 138 votes. There are 2989 lawyers registered in the association, but less than 2000 voted in the second and third rounds. About 100 lawyers from the West Bank and Gaza voted in the elections.

Shbeilat receives votes in Salt by-election

■ Last week's Salt by-election had more surprises than expected. Although the seat was lost by the Islamists to a tribalist candidate , the by-election was lackluster with only a 33 percent turnout. Furthermore, 309 votes were cancelled; most of these were for Leith Shbeilat who was disqualified from entering the election race because of his imprisonment.

Private universities under scrutiny

■ A number of Private universities are under fire from the Ministry of Higher Education. Stick to the rules or else, officials at the ministry have been reported as saying. Private universities are being criticized for not following the proper admissions procedure and *over-filling their lecture halls.* They are admitting far too many pupils officials argue, and this is against regulations. These universities are now being warned that if they don't stick to the rules of admission, they could have their licences revoked.

Jordanian deaths worry government

■ The recent deaths of young Jordanians in Iraq have become a major worry to the government. The Prime Minister, Mr Abdel Karim Al Kabariti, called in the Iraqi Ambassador in Amman, Mr Nouri Al Weiess and highlighted the worry of the government. He hoped that Iraqi officials would get to the bottom of the murders. Jordan's ambassador to Iraq Mr Bassam Qaqish has been recalled back to Amman to explain the situation in Iraq where a number of Jordanians have been killed in the last few weeks. The Iraqi ambassador said that Jordanians are treated well in Iraq and that these accidents could happen anywhere in the world. The Iraqi ambassador has also been recalled to Iraq for consultation. This is clearly a tit-for-tat action. But to squash speculations, the Minister of Information, Dr Marwan Al Muasher later said that the government has not asked Mr Al Weiess to leave the country. It is not clear either when Mr Qaqish will return to Baghdad to resume his post.

Beef stopped by Ministry

■ The Ministry of Supply is now on the look out for any imported red meat. About 209 tons of frozen beef from Holland were confiscated by the Ministry of Supply. The importers have been trying to get the shipment into the country through forged documents. The Minister of Supply, Munir Sober, said his ministry, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, decided not to let the shipment into the country. Mr Sober said that he also advised neighboring countries not to allow the shipment in. The Ministry has formed a special committee to make sure *that the meat shipment* is returned back to its place of origin, Holland. Mr Sober said companies have been warned to keep to strict guidelines and specifications in their import of red meat. He said the government will take measures against companies who do not follow its guidelines.

Israeli cars now allowed in country

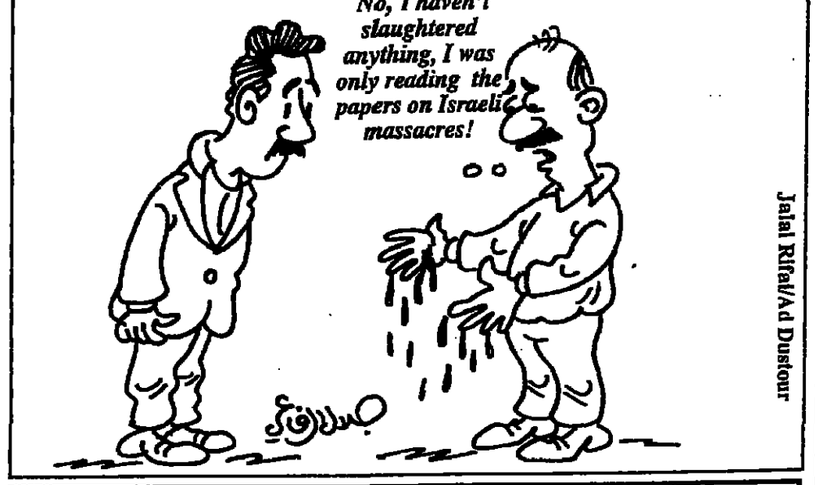
■ Cars with Israeli number plates are now allowed into the country. Cars will only be allowed to enter through the Wadi Araba bridge and are only allowed in the southern part of the country. Cars entering Wadi Araba must change their number plates before they can roam around. But the question that asks itself is why allow them only in the south if you are going to change their number plates. Surely, Israeli cars should be allowed anywhere in the Kingdom.

Water and electricity price rises questioned

■ The Government decision to increase water and electricity prices has come under fire from the Lower House's financial committee. Its *rapporteur,* Dr Mohammad Aweida, said the committee urged the governme nt to cancel its decision regarding the price increase in electricity to the consumer. Dr Aweida said there was no need for an increase especially since the the Electricity Authority is to be privatized. But others argue that it is precisely because of privatization that the government wants to beef up the profits of the industry so as to get a good deal. The financial committee also called on the government to study carefully the water price increases and make sure that they don't affect the poor.



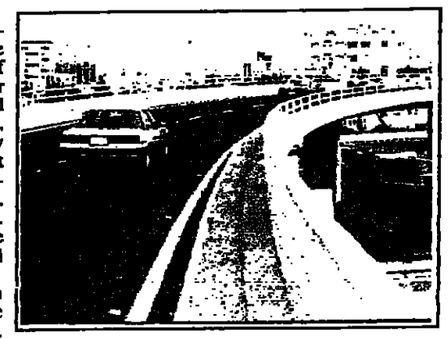
Aweida



Intersection shows off modern Amman

■ At last, the intersection of the flyover in the Jamal Abdel Nasser Square has been completed. It took a total of seven months, but the Amman Greater Authority (GAM) is to be congratulated for its hard work. The intersection, which leads to Al Abdalli, certainly helps to ease the traffic congestion that has been building up around the Interior Circle. It's cost is JD 1.4 million, but people argue its worth every penny. The engineering works were for the first time carried out by a local contractor.

The other project which has been completed is the underpass in the Prince Feisal Square on the 5th Circle. It was completed in a record time of 47 days due to 24-hour work. The 5th Circle used to be described as the black area because of the traffic congestion and pollution.



The underpass cost GAM JD 800,000, JD 300,000 of which went for the construction of the underpass. Both projects were opened by His Majesty King Hussein.

US planes on Jordanian soil: whose going to pay?

■ With people so engrossed by Israeli atrocities in Lebanon, the issue of US planes stationed in Azraq seems to have taken a back seat. The cost of the operation, which is to allow US planes to fly over southern Iraq, is $ 280 million. This expenditure includes training Jordanian pilots on the newly acquired F-16s. Jordan can't possibly afford all this but the US has promised to pay all expenses.

Conferences

■ *The Press and the Media: Reality and Prospects* is the title of a seminar that will be held on 4 May. The venue is a two-day event, held under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan. It discusses the role of the media in Jordan that will be held at the Royal Cultural Center. The meeting which is jointly organized by the Jordan-Islamic Center for Studies and Information, and the Greater Amman Municipality promises to be an exciting event attracting major names in the media. The topics include laws and legislations that affect the media, the administration of the media, and the issue of professionalism in the press. Among the guest speakers are the Minister of Information, Dr Marwan Al Muasher, Minister of Youth, Mr Muhammad Dawoudia, Former Minister of Justice Hisham Al Tal, and former Minister of Information, Dr Jawad Al Anani.

■ In celebration of World Press Freedom Day on 3 May, UNESCO in Amman is holding a one-day conference on the media in its headquarters. There is four roundtables on pluralism and independence of the media, journalists under fire, and press freedom. There is guest speakers from India, Namibia, Poland, Egypt and Russia. There is also an exhibition on journalists in jail and a video program on women and press freedom.

■ Under the patronage of HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies and the Indian Cultural Association in cooperation of the Indian Embassy are organizing an exhibition of original photographs in the Memory of Mahatma Gandhi on Saturday 4 May at the Royal Cultural Center at 6 pm. It will be followed by a showing of the film "Gandhi" at 7 pm. On 5 May, there is a panel discussion of the Relevance of Non-Violence to the Contemporary Middle East from 9 am to 1:30 pm.

Jordanians take to the streets

Continued from page 1

children is overlooked, for the sake of the so-called 'Security of Israel'," said Asma Khader, a prominent Jordanian lawyer. "Lebanon pays the lives of innocent people as a price to guarantee the security of Israel....It is unbearable that the security of Israel is becoming the responsibility of the whole world, even if it was at the expense of civilians," she added.

"The Jordan-Israeli treaty is not the most important reason behind people's cold reaction," said Dr Abdallah Nukrush, a lecturer in political science at the University of Jordan. "Daily concerns, the confusing statements of politicians and some people's desire not to put barriers towards a comprehensive peace are the most crucial reasons," he added.

The downtown demonstration attracted people of different political views which led to lack of organization due to counter-chanting. All present however, joined in the condemnation of the Israeli aggression.

"There is no doubt that diplomatic efforts to solve the situation are moving very slowly," said Khader. "These efforts are subject to Israeli military logic which conceives the lives of children as legitimate taxes for the accumulation of votes." ■

Lebanon crisis highlights rift

Continued from page 1

work for a quick ceasefire, but Jordan's contacts with the Lebanese could not progress.

The sources confirmed that the US has recognized Syria's influence in Lebanon and has aborted French and European diplomatic moves to intervene.

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher is mediating between Israel and Lebanon, but so far he has not met any Lebanese official. He has been shuttling between Israel and Damascus to present proposals for a ceasefire.

The sources stressed Lebanon's insistence that negotiations on the implementation of Security Council Resolution number 425—which calls for the full withdrawal of Israel from southern Lebanon—should begin at a later stage, especially as Russia and Europe share the opinion that Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon is the only solution to end the conflict. ■

PNC meets to consider scrapping charter

Continued from page 1

happiness will be complete only when all Palestinian refugees can return to a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

"I am completely against changing the covenant. I will not even attend the meeting where this is discussed," said Quba, 57. "Israel has annexed Jerusalem. Let them cancel this, and then we'll discuss a new constitution."

Quba's organization, the PFLP, rejects Arafat's 1993 peace agreement with Israel and did not participate in the Palestinian elections for a president and legislative council in January. The PFLP's leader, George Habash, did not return for the vote. One of the group's more notorious airline hijackers, Leila Khaled, did return to the West Bank, but did not attend the opening session of the PNC.

The return of these so-called rejectionists such as Mohammed Abu Daoud, a key operator in the Munich Olympics attack that left 11 Israeli athletes dead, have infuriated many Israelis, particularly in the right-wing opposition.

Peres has said he was keeping a promise that slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had made to Arafat to let all members of the PNC.

Many Palestinians argue that Arafat wants the "no" votes in order to legitimize the two-thirds majority of "yes" votes he needs to alter the PLO's charter. Other Palestinians argue that the only way to change the minds of some of these opponents of the step-by-step Israeli-Palestinian peace process is to get them into Palestinian-ruled area and get them working in the emerging political system.

That theory was endorsed by Saleh Tamari, a former guerrilla and member of the newly elected Palestinian legislative council who returned to Gaza with Arafat almost two years ago. "The difference between being in and out is the difference between being part of the event and living on the echo of the event," Tamari said.

The returnees seemed to reinforce this view with their own reactions to "Palestine" after so many years away. Many said the most shocking image on the trip overland from Jordan was of the sweeping red-tiled Jewish settlements in the West Bank. They knew the Jewish settlements were there, but had never seen the concrete in the ground.

Palestinians want to get to final negotiations with Israel to resolve the outstanding issues of Jewish settlements, control over Jerusalem and the size and status of Palestinian-ruled territory.

Tamari was confident that Arafat has the votes necessary to change the charter and get on with negotiations. "The charter is a part of our history and our heritage, even a part of our youth, and parting with it is like parting with something one grew up with. It's painful. But it doesn't respond to the requirements of the new era. It contradicts our decision to establish an independent state, which means accepting two states," he said. ■

Diplomatic flurry deadlocked

Continued from page 1

repeated declarations that they have a right to combat Israeli troops occupying a strip of southern Lebanon.

Meanwhile, key details began to emerge Monday of the separate, and in some ways competing, American and French plans for a cease-fire in southern Lebanon—and they help explain why it is taking so long to stop the fighting.

The French plan goes much further toward accommodating the interests of Hezbollah than does the American proposal. The United States and Israel do not like these French proposals, but the Lebanese and Syrian governments appear to be taking them seriously.

The major differences between the French and American proposals are over the following issues:

■ What sort of protection, if any, will be provided to Israeli security forces in southern Lebanon;

■ Whether and how soon the Israeli forces might withdraw from Lebanon;

■ How and with what personnel the peace in southern Lebanon would be preserved, once it is finally restored.

Under the original American plan, the Israeli forces would get greater protection from Hezbollah attacks than they have had before. But under the French proposal, the Israeli military forces would get no more protection than they had in the past, and would be required to withdraw within a fixed, relatively short period.

However, a senior French official outlined the differences between the US plan and the one being circulated throughout the Middle East by Foreign Minister Herve de Charette. As outlined by the French official, the United- States is seeking promises that Hezbollah will restrain its military operations inside Israel's self-styled "security zone" in southern Lebanon. That would prevent attacks on Israeli military forces and on the Southern Lebanese Army, set up and backed by Israel.

The French proposal would merely restrict Hezbollah attacks against civilians inside northern Israel. It would, in effect, give legitimacy to Hezbollah's argument that the Israeli military units on Lebanese soil are an outside occupation force and should not be guaranteed protection from Hezbollah.

Clinton administration officials, who have been publicly polite but privately furious about the independent French diplomacy, refuse to discuss the details of the two plans.

Another important difference between the two plans is in how to guarantee that the cease-fire is preserved.

France is offering to send French civilians or even troops to southern Lebanon as part of an international monitoring committee to keep the peace. Under this proposal, Israel would be barred from retaliating against any offense in southern Lebanon without first going to this international committee.

Together with France, the United States would be one of the leaders of such a committee. But Clinton administration officials have made it plain they have no intention of sending American troops to keep the peace in southern Lebanon.

France also is proposing a target of the end of this year for completing a peace settlement between Israel and Lebanon that would pave the way for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon. French officials argue that such a short-term deadline would be an incentive to Hezbollah to accept a ceasefire this week.

US officials have said they want to negotiate a peace settlement between Israel and Lebanon, but the American plan apparently does not set any quick time limit for Israeli withdrawal. ■

Britain comes to Forte Grand

AMMAN (Star)—This summer "Britain" will be coming to Forte Grand Amman. Under the patronage of the British Ambassador in Amman, Mr Peter Hinchcliffe, there will be a trade catalogue and product exhibition between 16-19 June. The exhibit, entitled Lifestyle, is arranged by the Department of Trade and Industry in the UK.

The event will involve British companies looking to set up trade links with Jordan. There will be a host of cultural activities sponsored by the British Council, British Airways, ANZ Grindleys Bank, The British Bank of the Middle East, Johnnie Walker, ICI paints, Rover Cars, Landrover, Petra Navigation, British Education Abroad and Fasha. ■

CLASSIFIEDS

● A large two bedroom apartment in Shmeisani, on the third or fourth circles. Under JD1800 a year. Tel. 839 679

● A foreign secretary required to work for an artist in Amman. Tel: 748399

● Honda Accord, Model EX, 2 doors, sun roof, stereo, 1984, 150.000 kms, yellow plates, duty unpaid, Price: JD 2000.







People & Politics



Turning warm peace into cold turkey

■ It's exactly like old times; mass demonstrations against "the Zionist entity," the burning of the Israeli flag, brandishing slogans that we thought have had it. But the scenes, an anathema for Israeli public relations architects including some Arabs, are real. Jordanians have taken to the streets, just like their bretherns in Egypt, Palestine and elsewhere to denounce Israeli barbarism and its onslaught on Lebanon. *Although Arab reaction has, as usual* been confined to emotional backlashes, there are those who believe that the warm peace that was slowly heating up between Jordan and Israel is as good as a cold turkey.

It is difficult to make sense of Shimon Peres actions in Lebanon. But one thing is for sure. He has alienated his Arab allies, from Oman to Morocco, by unleashing his destructive machine in an indiscriminate orgy of murder and mayhem *against* Lebanon's *civilians*. Israel's peaceful *image*, which Peres has built for many years now, has been shattered for good.

Jordanian opposition, including political parties, labor, students, women's movements, and professional unions among others could not let such an opportunity go to waste. Just when the opponents of the Jordan-Israel peace treaty were licking their wounds and rethinking their strategy, and just when some opposition deputies were shouting that the treaty was a reality and that leopards can actually shed their spots, Peres made his blunder and offered the forces of opposition a *reason to reunite and regroup.*

The recent campaign against Lebanon has rekindled the embers of hatred and distrust among the Jordanian public. Israel has once again assumed its rightful place as the entity most loathed by Arabs. The question is not if the peace process is dead, because even the opponents know that no force on earth can turn the clock back to the early 1990's or 1980's, but rather if normalization has become an offensive word even for the government.

The pounding of Lebanese villages for more than two weeks now has embarrassed members of the peace camp and those dreaming of a new Middle East on the Arab side. Some opponents of the peace process have aimed their criticisms at the government and at Mr Kabariti in particular, who visited Israel a week ago to express Jordan's position to the Israeli leadership. But it would be ludicrous to blame Jordan for what is happening in South Lebanon. Israel's iron-fist policy in Lebanon today is a standard policy for all Israeli premiers since Menachem Begin.

Shimon Peres' misadventure in Lebanon has put the peace camp on the defensive. In Jordan, His Majesty King Hussein was very critical of the Israeli government's actions and the sense behind its military operation in Lebanon. Jordan condemned the aggression on Lebanon, but made it clear that it can only interfere up to a certain limit. The King hinted that Jordan was not the party responsible for protecting Lebanon. While last week's call by 11 deputies, mostly Islamists, on the government to abrogate the peace treaty will not be heeded, it has annoyed, more than anything, those who *thought Jordan's peace with Israel would be different.*

But one thing is for sure, the lacerations that Israel's "Grapes of Wrath" has left on the peace process will not disappear overnight.

Diana Abu-Jaber

A new novel to fill the silence

Some stories of brutality were stunning. They added a dimension that is different than the large, historical picture of dispossession

EDITOR'S NOTE: Diana Abu Jaber is a US citizen of mixed Jordanian/ Palestinian-American heritage. In 1993, she published *Arabian Jazz*, her first novel. In hard-hitting, yet lyrical and imaginative prose, she tells the story of two sisters, daughters of an Arab immigrant father and American mother who dies prematurely. Besides missing their mother/wife, all three miss a clear sense of where they belong. They straddle the cultural divide between East and West, between America and "the old country." In this situation, "You get two looks at the world. You may never have a perfect fit, but you see far more than most ever do" (*Arabian Jazz*, page 330).

This year Diana Abu-Jaber is in Jordan on a Fulbright scholarship, preparing further writings. *The Star*'s Sally Bland spoke to her on her latest novel.



Diana Abu Jaber

Is your new novel an outgrowth of the themes you addressed in *Arabian Jazz* or something totally different?

Actually, there are two new projects. One is the book I started in America and finished here. It is my second novel, loosely based on my grandmother who grew up in Palestine and came to Jordan to marry. She is more the inspiration for the book than a documentary source—a muse rather than a historical figure. Essentially, it is a women's novel. The three main characters are women. It is written from the perspective of the child and the mothers, and deals with the difficult of raising children in different cultures. It is about remembering and recreating one's identity.

This novel is also intended to fill silences. In my own family, my father was more assertive. My mother stepped back from his more vocal assertions that we were Jordanians. She perhaps knew that immigrants need to recreate themselves and their identity.

I wanted to deal with the mystery of the silent parent. In the novel, it *is the* Palestinian mother who is quiet about her past. Her daughter has to pierce the silence. I wanted to hear more from women in the camps about what happened to them in 1948: How was the atmosphere? How did they perceive the Israelis? Again, the story goes back to mother and families, like in *Arabian Jazz*.

While in Jordan I took off on a third project as well. It is not yet completely defined but it will probably be my third novel. The theme is reconciliation. I started with the idea of what peace means, and especially how people deal with the notion of forgiveness. There is a dilemma involved here: To forgive, it seems you have to forget a bit, because things are so painful. But if you forget, can you really forgive?

What camps have you visited and what were your impressions? How were you received?

In Palestine, I visited camps near Bethlehem, in Gaza and outside of Jerusalem. It was interesting to see how hard conditions still are, even for those living in a camp since 1948. Homes are very basic. For example, one family was living in a chicken coop. In another, 12 people lived in one room with no furniture except for a television set which everyone was watching. I found this a perfect metaphor of the Western presence which has been successful in selling its own consumerism.

People are discouraged. They have talked to so many people, journalists, etc., but they feel they are not being heard in the West. There is national pride, but they are spiritually, emotionally and materially exhausted. It is a powerful experience to enter a camp. The children are the front line. They watch you, and I felt they were telegraphing their impressions; then you are accepted.

I found people very receptive. There is a kind of gratitude and appreciation of a Western woman who connects with them and listens.

There is national pride, but [people] are spiritually, emotionally and materially exhausted

Were people's personal memories different from what you expected, or from written accounts of the 1948 exodus?

Some stories of brutality were stunning. One woman remembered how the Israelis told the people of her village to go into the hills so that they *could protect the village. After* living in the fields for weeks, they found they could not return to their village, so they moved to another place. The stunning thing was that the children, while playing in the fields, found a mass grave. In another case, women told how they fled with a neighbor who *was carrying her child with* her. After running quite far she found it was only a pillow, and that she had lost her child in the panic. These stories were so vivid and eerie. They added a dimension that is different than the large, historical picture of dispossession. ■

King to visit South Africa and attend UNCTAD conference



HIS MAJESTY King Hussein is expected to leave the country for South Africa shortly. He is heading a high ranking Jordanian delegation on an official visit.

His Majesty is expected to meet the President of South Africa, Mr Nelson Mandella to discuss bilateral relationships and issues of common concern.

The King will attend the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which is hosted by the South African Government at Midrand. It will last from 27 April to 11 May.

The First Secretary of the South African Embassy in Amman, Mr A.R. Greenham told *The Star* that up to 3000 delegates from 187 countries are expected to attend.

Many heads of state will also be present for part of the proceedings, which coincides with South Africa's Freedom Day on 27 April.

Mr Greenham also said that his country as host, is expected to give some direction to the conference and help set the organisation's agenda for at least the next four years.

South Africa sees the conference as a seminal opportunity to enhance the participation of the South (developing countries) in the new trade and development issues, and re-establish the need for the UN to be central to the development debate between and amongst developed and developing countries, he concluded. ■

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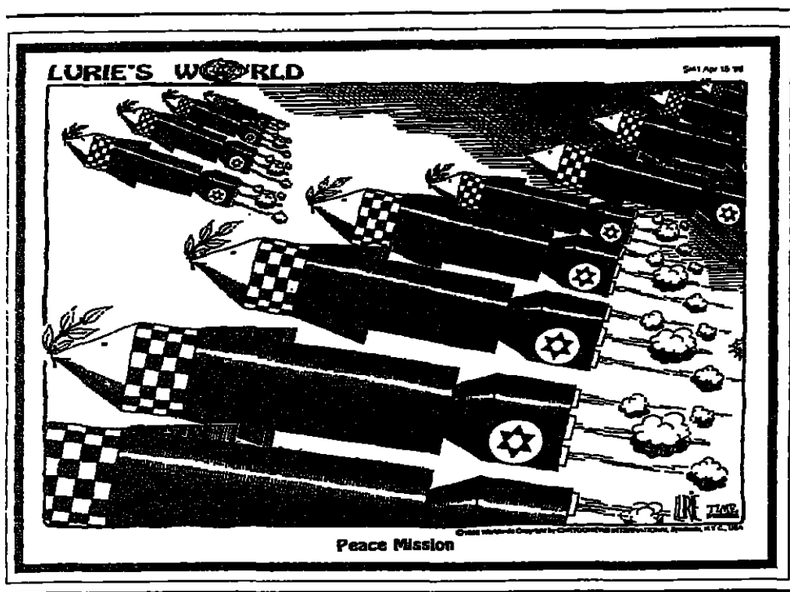
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Peace Mission

Our Say. . . .

Peres, Lebanon quagmire

ISRAEL'S "GRAPES of Wrath" operation in Lebanon, which is entering its third week, is turning into a political quagmire for Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres. The operation, with all its barbarity and crudeness, has failed to achieve its military and political objectives. Instead, as US Secretary of State Warren Christopher's mediation mission drags on, it now appears that Mr Peres has managed quiet successfully to write himself out as the historic leader he had once hoped to be. Israel's northern borders are still vulnerable to Hizbollah Katyusha attacks and Israel's bluff in Lebanon has failed to bring the Syrians to heel. On the contrary, it now appears that Lebanon and Syria have the moral high ground in this latest power struggle.

Mr Peres has not impressed his countrymen as a military strategist either. He has brought shame to the Israeli army which has so far succeeded in killing innocent civilians under the protection of UN peacekeeping forces. On the political front, Mr Peres is not faring any better. He has alienated the more than one million Israeli Arabs who traditionally voted Labor, and the leftist parties which supported his coalition on the basis of Mr Peres' campaign for a lasting peace with the Palestinians and the rest of the Arabs.

Mr Peres has proved to be a hypocrite and a loser. This is the message he was able to send to Israeli voters one month before the general elections. His dismal failure at the elections will not come as a surprise.

The set-back to the peace process is unforgivable. Mr Peres has managed to undo in three weeks what he has been striving to maintain for the last three years. He has embarrassed his Arab partners in the peace process. He has compromised the US position as an honest broker in the region. He has made a mockery of the declarations of the Sharm El Sheikh Summit on terrorism. He has given Hizbollah and other anti-Israel movements, both militant and political, a golden opportunity to gather pace and round up public support. He has dealt a severe blow to the notion of warm peace between the Arabs and Israel and by doing so he has restored Israel's ugly image as a belligerent state that only knows the language of military might.

Regardless of the deal Mr Christopher will strike between Israel and Hizbollah, Mr Peres will not be able to face the Israeli public as a victor. He wanted to rise to the occasion and become another Ben Gurion, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin or even Menachem Begin. But all he was able to become is a bewildered and bitter politician, blinded by his eagerness to win.

Even if Mr Peres was able to win the next elections, his victory will mean nothing to the peace process. His misadventure in Lebanon and the lack of a clear policy on how to deal with the Palestinians added to the issues of security on the northern front and Israel's occupation of South Lebanon, will continue to haunt him. Mr Peres has not shown wisdom and leadership when the need for such qualities was pressing. His victory would have come at a great cost. ■


Demonstrators burn the Israeli flag after the Friday prayers in Istanbul.

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Lebanon

Victim of Sharm el Sheikh and Israel's elections tactics

By Awni Abu Ghosh

THE CONTINUATION of the Israeli aggression on Lebanon leaves little room for the successive diplomatic efforts that are currently going on.

Mainly backed by the US and Britain, the Israeli 'Grapes of Wrath Operation' in Lebanon now proceeds unabated into its third week. Israel's Prime Minister Shimon Peres recently said that the operation in Lebanon has no time limit. This means that the Israeli war against the defenseless Lebanese people will go ahead until further notice, or until the Israeli leaders are satisfied with the results achieved by their war machinery.

The forced migration of hundreds of thousands of innocent citizens, the arbitrary destruction of dozens of Lebanese towns and villages, and the imposed economic blockade and the unsafe transport means and routes have been called a genocide against the children of Lebanon.

Surprisingly, all these atrocities have been taking place before the eyes of the whole world. Neither the Security Council, nor the General Assembly has even stood up to observe UN resolution 425 which calls for the Israeli withdrawal. Southern Lebanon was occupied by Israel since 1982 under the pretext of ensuring security for Galilee.

As that security hasn't been guaranteed, the current military onslaught has only one interpretation: drowning the region in blood for the sake of the sham Israeli security claim. Israel can certainly obtain and enjoy security in the region only if it recognizes the same right for its neighbors. But since it continues to occupy the territories of those neighbors for her self-centred security reasons, then it is only logical that she loses both peace and good neighborliness.

However, under the prevalent international balance of forces, Israel resorts to a different language and mechanism from those of peace and negotiation. With its understanding of the Sharm el Sheikh Summit resolve to combat terrorism and promote peace-building, Israel has indulged in the most obnoxious and destructive approach to collective peace and security in the region.

Basing herself on her superior economic and military might in the Middle East, and on the unilateral world order, Israel persists in enforcing its strategies on its neighbors. This is not through common understanding and mutual respect, but through force—the product of the past era. This is what, indeed, it does in Lebanon, with a clear message to Syria.

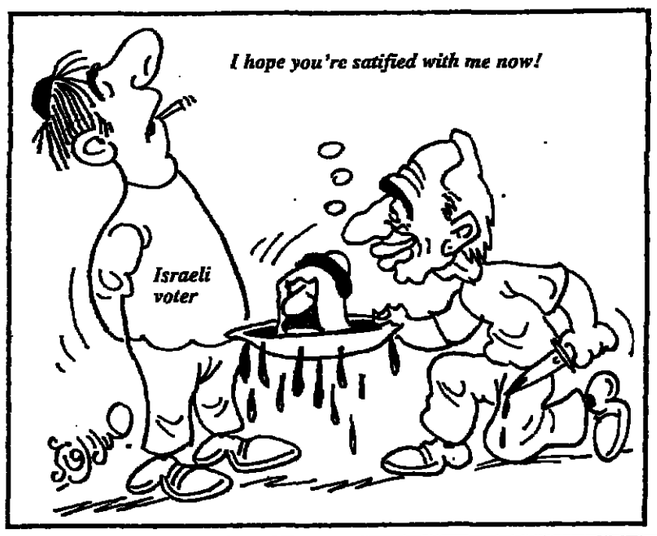
Meanwhile, by doing so, Israeli leaders, who are facing a general election at the end of May, mobilized their people behind Israel's powerful military might and the dictates of force against their paralyzed Arab neighbors.

Israel is encouraged in its anti-peace endeavors by the lack of deterrence of any kind and from any direction. But how long can this attitude towards peace survive in the region? The first, probably the only attempt to curb Israel's coercive approach and cruel aggression came from the French. However, it was the US—not Israel—which has encountered and tried to frustrate it. Considered as involving American-European rivalry in this strategic area, this US-French obversion also recalls their oppositeness on the Middle East Development Bank. In both incidents, the peoples of the region are the only losers.

In the former case—the French proposal of a ceasefire— the whole peace process that losses and at the hands of those who claim to have initiated and proceeded with it. Unfortunately, the impotent and submissive Arab stance, and their rush to normalize, have given Israel an unprecedented opportunity to impose on or extract from the Arabs whatever she wants. The question is then: will this lead to the peace which the Arabs aspire to? Is this the Israel which the Arabs want to coexist with?

In fact, not only has Israel deepened in the minds and hearts of the Israeli people the outdated concepts of belligerency, but has also undermined the fundamental bases of peace and normalization. One should not forget that Israel's military operation in Lebanon was preceded by her agreement of military cooperation with Turkey, and the US military existence on Arab territories and waters.

This clearly demonstrates that US-Israeli military alliance becomes stronger as Arab unity and solidarity continue to become weaker and feebler.■



Slaughter of Lebanese strips steel from Israel's resolve

By Barton Gellman
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

JERUSALEM—When Israel began bombarding Lebanon nine days ago, its military and political leaders spoke in steely tones of their resolve to press on until they changed the "rules of the game" against Hezbollah.

Last Thursday's slaughter of some 100 Lebanese refugees has stripped the steel from such talk. Operation Grapes of Wrath is running out of time, and Israel has lost most of its leverage in the US-led negotiations over terms of a cease-fire.

That was the gloomy assessment shared throughout Israel's political class today. There was grief over the loss of life from two errant howitzer shells on a UN compound near Tyre, albeit tinged with a lot of defensive talk about good intentions and bad luck. But the dominant subject of the day was the government's shattered ambition in the war.

Amnon Avramovitch, a well-known commentator, said on a television news broadcast that the world's repugnance at the shelling of civilians was a "disaster" because "Israel will be forced to halt this operation prematurely."

"From yesterday [Thursday] evening," columnist Hemi Shalev wrote in *Maariv*, "Israel is again bogged down in the Lebanese mud."

In a favorite national expression, Israelis have been to this movie before. They have been looking since 1978 for a formula that lets them control enough of southern Lebanon to make them feel safe from infiltration and attack, but neither a large war in 1982 nor a small one in 1993 helped for long.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres had no illusion that one week's pounding could put an end to the grinding war of attrition in the occupied strip of southern Lebanese hills that Israel declared as its "security zone" more than 10 years ago. But he did want to change the terms of that war in two important ways.

First, he wanted an understanding that Hezbollah, or the Party of God, would not launch guerrilla attacks on Israeli soldiers in Lebanon from the cover of sympathetic Shiite Muslim villages nearby. This amounted to a demand that the guerrilla force come out and fight like an army, or quit fighting. Village or no village, Peres said, Israel would have a free hand to return fire.

Second, Peres wanted Syria to guarantee that Hezbollah would not fire Katyusha rockets or any other weapons into northern Israel.

With 35,000 troops astride Hezbollah's only supply lines, there is reason to suppose that President Hafez Assad could control Hezbollah activities. But Assad's silence in the face of repeated appeals by the Clinton administration on Israel's behalf made it clear that he would not.

That made Operation Grapes of Wrath a race against time. Could Israel inflict enough pain on Lebanon, and indirectly on its protector in Damascus, to force Assad to accept the new ground rules before international pressures stopped the fight?

The question was open until Thursday. But Thursday's catastrophe lost the crucial backing of the Clinton administration for pressing the war. "It's obvious now that there is almost no way to contain the loss of innocent life," Clinton said.

US special Middle East envoy Dennis Ross arrived for talks with Peres and Foreign Minister Ehud Barak. Secretary of State Warren Christopher is now following a shuttle diplomacy between Israel, Syria and Lebanon. Christopher's mission, most commentators here believe, is to shut the conflict down as fast as he can.

Already, Peres is changing the tone of his public remarks, dropping suggestions that his army could fight on indefinitely. "We shouldn't forfeit the goals of the war," he said, "but I would be careful not to elevate them to a level that prolonged the war."

Peres also shifted from the demand that his forces operate freely against Hezbollah fighters in the villages. Instead he tried to revive an older plan in which Israel would gradually cede the "security zone" to the Lebanese army on condition that the Lebanese disarm Hezbollah and welcome back members of the Israeli-sponsored militia, the South Lebanese Army.

That, too, is up to Syria, without whose consent Lebanon's government can do nothing. And there is little sign that Assad will go along.

All this bad news has punctured the near-euphoria with which Israelis greeted the military campaign at its start. What first appeared a political windfall for Peres, who runs for reelection 29 May, now carries the seeds of setbacks on several fronts.

Israeli Arabs, who make up 19 percent of the population, are outraged at last week's massacre and the deliberate creation by Peres of up to 400,000 Lebanese refugees. Their leaders are vowing to boycott all events attended by Peres and to cast blank ballots for prime minister on election day. Peres is counting on a heavy Arab majority and a high turnout next month, and if the Israeli Arabs make good on their threat it will hurt him.

A weak exit from Lebanon, on the other hand, could damage Peres's campaign to persuade swing voters who want their government to show a strong hand while working simultaneously for peace. Peres has the peace credentials well in hand, but he is not seen by many Israelis as a man who knows how to wield the army's fist.

"The Israeli public may not like an end to hostilities which does not lead to a decisive military victory over Hezbollah," said Yossi Olmert, an expert on Syria who is associated with the opposition Likud party.

That victory was probably never in prospect, but Peres may have allowed public hopes to soar too far.

"Anyone who sets expectations too high in Lebanon," said Interior Minister Yossi Sarid, "cannot fulfill them." ■

Letters to the Editor

World does nothing as Israel continues its killing of civilians in Lebanon

THE ISRAELI army's bombing of a UN camp for refugees, who were ironically fleeing Southern Lebanon, is another display of the Zionist entity's disregard for human life, peace, and the sovereignty of a border country.

The brutal action, which killed at least 100 innocent civilians, comes just after the Israelis deliberately shelled a clearly marked ambulance, resulting in the slaughter of six people, including four children.

Incredibly, much of the rest of the world, primarily Israel's chief backers in the West, have looked on this murderous assault as a "legitimate" defensive tactic against supposed "terrorist" attacks from Hizbollah. According to this philosophy—bandied about in the Western press—the Israeli terrorist state strategy of bombing Beirut and other communities, blockading port cities, and producing turmoil and more refugees, is designed to force Lebanese and Syrian authorities to crack down on Hizbollah "terrorists." If this philosophy is the right one, then why doesn't Britain bomb Dublin in an effort to stop IRA terrorism?

Is not the West's moral support of the Zionist entity's barbarous assault the height of hypocrisy?

Another fact conveniently ignored by the Zionist-controlled Western press is that the Israeli terrorist state is occupying the south of Lebanon, in contravention of a UN resolution calling for its withdrawal. Hizbollah who, because of the Western press, appears to attack the Zionist entity for no particular reason, in fact wants to liberate their occupied lands. Iraq was forced to withdraw from Kuwait, so why is not the Israeli terrorist regime forced to withdraw from southern Lebanon?

This is a clear double standard, clearly apparent to anyone not blinded by Zionist propaganda. Also, the Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Al Hariri, made the valid point that, "Hizbollah gains power with each attack," and that "If there were no [Israeli] occupation, there would be no reason for Hizbollah to exist. "It is important to note that as the world remembers the 'Holocaust' of half a century ago, the Israeli regime is today embarking on its own policy of blitzkrieg and genocide against it's Lebanese neighbors.

Fifty years since the end of World War II have Western leaders learnt anything? When will they condemn the barbarous crimes of the Israeli regime? ■

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Middle East Beat by Khairi Jaabek

Diminishing returns

JUST AS the law of diminishing returns stipulates that at one point, the more one invests the less are the returns, the more people get involved in Lebanon, the less likely ready made solutions will be available.

The legacy of foreign power intervention in Lebanese affairs led in the recent past to death and anguish for American as well as French troops. This time however, it seems that the diplomats have taken over where the soldiers have left of.

Both countries are heavily involved in brokering a cease fire between the combatants, each presumably for their own private agenda. Just as Israel and her proxies, as well as Syria and her proxies are the evil doers, then who are the good guys if not the French and the Americans. As the only viable police force in the world, the Americans will probably bring to an end their stint at globalism in the 20 Century with a major success by solving one of the most difficult problems in the world, that of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

With the signature of the Free Trade Agreements, the USA has actually brought to an end the myth of economic domination of the globe and started gradually sinking into a relative state of isolationism. America will not need the world soon, and before diminishing returns hit her, she will try to produce a new police station, knowing only too well that the likely candidates are very reluctant. President Clinton can start rejoicing, another term in office seems likely.

The French involvement in this matter perhaps stems from more complicated reasons than events seem to suggest. The French government decided to send her envoy of goodwill to the area without any consultations with her EU partners. It is very easy to resort to the defunct old cliches regarding the parochial relations between the two countries and the close identification of the Lebanese with successive French Republics. The truth of the matter is far less subjective and emotional. In any case, the mainly Francophone dimension of the Lebanese society (the Maronites) are neither effected directly nor indirectly by this recent escalation of violence. The battle is technically still between expropriators and the dispossessed, and France does not particularly care so long as her foothold can be established and maintained in the region.

France wants to play a bigger role in the region, and what better than investing in the future of an area which is still considered internationally dangerous, keeping the faint hearted away.

A perspective lucrative market is in the making, an issue which was missed by the Norwegians when they brokered the Palestinian-Israeli peace treaty, and ended up as charitable donors rather than merchants. If luck serves the French, then we are talking about a large market to include Lebanon, Syria, Israel and even Iran. A little ultraism mixed with business acumen can go very far in our war-torn world. Perhaps Sarajevo is a good international example.

What is missing in all this mess is the usual absence of an Arab or even an Islamic initiative to stop the killing. Perhaps the Lebanese people do not wish for such an initiative, for the last time an Arab walked in to stop the conflict they remained in the country and became a part of its woes.

One would dread the idea of the presence of a multi-Arab force in Lebanon, fighting their own differences on fraternal soil. Perhaps we are better off without our own initiatives, for if someone else can solve our problems, why not? ■

Business scene

Foreign Exchange

Buy JD	Sell JD
0.7080	0.7100
1.0698	1.0754
0.4665	0.4688
0.5756	0.5785
0.1378	0.1380
0.6627	0.6660
0.4184	0.4215
0.0456	0.0458

M

Highest and lo

FRIDAY

SUN

Arab Bank

Business scene

■ A JD 7.5 million agreement on hotel and tourist village building on the Dead Sea was signed by the Ministry of Water and Irrigation this week. The project will offer about 10,000 jobs.

■ Assets of the Arab Jordanian Investment Bank amounted to JD 3,509 million by the end of 1995 compared to JD 3,423 million in 1994. The Bank's lending portfolio amounted to JD 60.6 million, while its liquid assets reached JD 140.7 million. The customers deposits amounted to JD 145 million, and the bank's profits yielded JD 2.46 million.

■ Jordan's Modern Cable Company's sales in 1995 were JD 6,686,515 worth, of which 64.9% was in the local market, while 35.1% was sold abroad. The company's total profit was JD 778,605 (i.e. 11.64% of the sales) and its net profit amounted to JD 300,546.

■ The Public Housing and Urbanization Corp., is embarking on a JD 101 million project of housing for low-income and civil servant staff in the country. The planned project includes the construction of 4,150 housing units this year at a cost of JD 34 million. The project is scheduled to be completed in 1998.

■ The total value of the contracts signed by the Arab Corp., for Investment Securities was $63.1 million (i.e. 73.6% increase over 1994) while its paid up compensations amounted to $4.1 million.

■ The net profits of the Phosphate Mining Co., during 1995 amounted to JD 15.5 million. The company's sales during the same year valued JD 226.1 million compared to JD 91.6 million in 1994. Shareholders' equity was JD 180,072,025, while the company's budget was closed at JD 387,537,179.

■ The shareholders' equity in the Jordan-Kuwait Bank increased to JD 19.893 million in 1995. This is compared to JD 18.547 million in the previous year. The bank's assets valued JD 248.5 million in 1995 against JD 220 million in 1994. The bank's net profit increased by JD 1.414 million. The Jordan-Kuwait Bank opened a new branch in Nablus.

Foreign Exchange

Wednesday, 25 APRIL

	Buy JD	Sell JD
[illegible]	0.7080	0.7100
[illegible]	1.0698	1.0751
[illegible]	0.4665	0.4688
[illegible]	0.5756	0.5785
[illegible]	0.1378	0.1380
[illegible]	0.6627	0.6660
[illegible]	0.4194	0.4215
[illegible]	0.0456	0.0458

CBJ report for 1995 points to 6.4% increase in GDP

Economic growth rates with a prudent financial policy

THE 1995 annual report of the Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) confirms that Jordan's economic performance was harmonious with its planned course that began in 1992. As a result, inflation remained at a reasonable rate, while unemployment slightly decreased.

Jordan witnessed a 6.4% economic growth, according to preliminary estimates. This is compared to 5.9% for 1994 and 1993. This increase was due to expansion in the service and trade sectors, and to the increase in the net earnings of indirect taxes.

The mining sector also grew by 18%, and the trade, restaurants and hotel industry registered an increase of 9%. The report notes that those achievements were owed to the significant improvements in the export of primary products, and the invigoration of the tourism sector. It adds that other sectors realized growth rates between 3% in the conversion industry and 6% in social services.

The report underlines that the 10.3% growth rate in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was due to the increase in public and private expenditure. This made a 5.1 point percent input. However, investment expenditure contributed by 3.3%.

In regard to prices, the report says that Jordan's economy realized a marked improvement owing to the adoption of policies of demand management, the tendency to strengthen the supply side of the economy, and the abundance of agricultural products. In fact, inflation average rates compared to relative changes in the standard record of living costs dropped to 2.3% as compared to 3.6% in 1994. Moreover, improvement of economic performance in 1995 has resulted in a 6.4% increase in the per capita income to JD 1.077 (or $1.537), a 2.6% increase over 1994. In the labor market, estimates show that unemployment rates fell by 0.3% than over the year before. Unemployment now stands at 15%.

The report points out that other positive changes contributed to the improvement in the economy. It says that economic growth, which also accompanied the continued reform in the budget, enabled the government to control any increase in the state's financial deficit from its 1994 level. This deficit did not exceed 46.9%, that is 2.5% less than the year before. The report adds that the financial deficit for 1995 (before aid) in terms of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is compatible to that envisaged by the economic plan, though it registered a JD 2.8 million retreat from the expectations of the economic reform program.

The report notes that public earnings have increased by 8.8% over 1994, whereas public expenditures grew by 12.6%. It explains that domestic revenues constituted 86.1% of the gross public earnings compared to 85.0% in 1994.

As for capital expenditure, the report says that its ratio to the gross public expenditure increased to 24% compared to 22.1% for the year before.

Domestic and foreign debt was also among the major issues which were tackled. The report notes that the prudent fiscal policy of the government led to an 18.2% decrease in the debt burden and to a 20.9% ratio of the GDP compared to 28.2% in 1994. The report explains that this decrease has eased the way for the private sector to contribute more in domestic economic activity.

However, the report says that foreign debt registered a slight increase of 2.9% in 1995 over the year before. This was due to the Government's external financial requirements for economic reform and for the restructuring of economic entities in the country. It adds that in spite of this increase, the foreign debt ratio to GDP decreased to 96.6% compared to 103.5% in 1994.

Monetary policy managed to realize stability as a basis for balanced and sustainable economic growth within an environment of stable prices in the local market maintains the report. It adds that such a situation required, in 1995, the preservation of an acceptable level of liquidity at registered banks by indirect control of banking securities. The report explains that the CBJ has completely cancelled, since the beginning of 1995, the limits of assigned securities through its interference in the financial market by selling and purchasing certificates of deposits (CDs). As a result, CD assets increased by JD 39.9 million (14.2%) during 1995. Likewise interest rates also increased over their 1994 level from 7.75% and 7.94% for the periods of three and six months respectively to 8.75% and 9.0% in 1995 for the same periods. By so doing, the CBJ managed to curb liquidity at the local market within an average of 6.6% in 1995 compared to 8.0% in the year before.

As for the exchange rate of the dinar vis-a-vis the US dollar, the CBJ decided in late November 1995 on a strict rate that was conducive to the dinar's effective stability. ■

Jordan witnessed a 6.4% economic growth, according to preliminary estimates. This is compared to 5.9% for 1994 and 1993. This increase was due to expansion in the service and trade sectors, and to the increase in the net earnings of indirect taxes.

Business Chronicle

On the trade accord with Israel

THE JORDAN-Israel Trade Accord, which was signed last October, came into effect on 20 April. How far and/or to what extent, the fruits of its feasibility can be felt by the ordinary man in the street is a question of time.

The lack of statistics on the needs of the Israeli market for Jordanian products has created confusion, especially among manufacturers, businessmen, and wholesale traders, who are concerned about finding a secure alternative to the constricted Iraqi market.

There are people in this country who believe that this accord provides an encouraging stimulus to products from Jordan. They maintain that these goods will enter and compete in Israel, having the advantage of the customs exempt clause in the provisions of the agreement.

Optimists of the current and future performance of the Jordan-Israel trade exchange believe that it will start its deliberations with momentum. They base this view on the fact that several trade contracts have already been signed between Jordan and Israeli companies, while some already confirm the circulation of certain Israeli goods in the Jordanian market. These optimists point out that a Jordanian air-conditioning company has signed a contract with an Israeli firm to install and operate an air-conditioning system in Ben Gurion Airport by the year 2000 at a cost of $200 million.

Nevertheless, the Jordan-Israel trade agreement is certainly more in favour of Israel, due to the latter's stronger economy and highly advanced technology. Though trade exchange between the two countries is expected to range between $10-80 million annually, it is feared that Israeli companies will flood the Jordanian market with cheaper goods, thus affecting the local market. Hence, while caution in dealing commercially with Israel is necessary, concentration on trade with the PNA as a partial compensation for the Iraqi market is much more important. ■

Syria

A detailed profile for the foreign investor

IN THE course of the last four years, Syria has developed into one of the Middle East's most dynamic markets for foreign goods, services and investment. Economic liberalization and greatly increased oil revenues have sustained rapid economic growth. This is according to the latest report on Syria published by Andrew Jeffreys and Christain Schneider-Sickret.

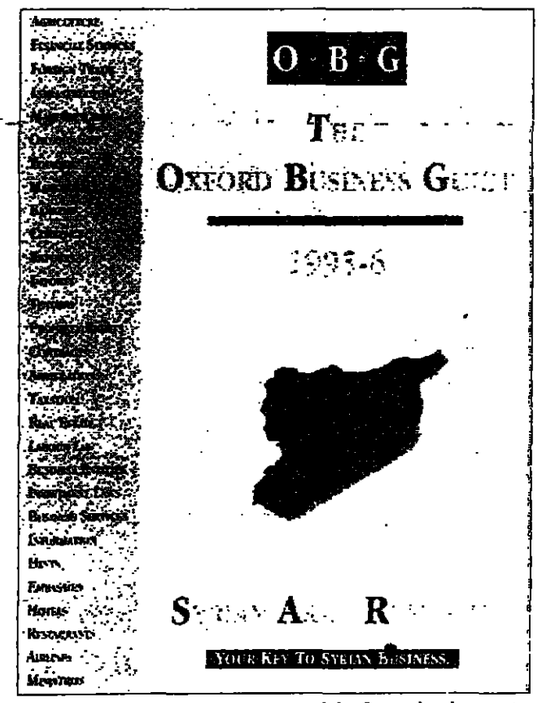
The Syrian Arab Republic, Your Key to Syrian Business, 1995-6 is essential for the businessman who wishes to invest in Syria.

The first part gives an over view of the Syrian economy, providing the investor with valuable information. It deals with the issue of liberalization, financial services, foreign trade, infrastructure, manufacturing and agriculture. These are packed with detailed statistical information about the economic development of Syria.

Part two is designed to the foreign investor. Entitled 'how to do business,' it has everything from banking and currency, foreign trade regulations, property rights, to investment legislation and taxation, something that is dear to the heart of any potential investor.

The report says that since 1991 alone, local investors have pledged over $5 billion in investments and the country has received an estimated $8 bn in external aid.

The expansion of the oil and gas industry, a massive infrastructure development program and the unsatisfied demand for modern consumer goods have attracted a host of European, American and Japanese firms. Others are preparing to enter after the expected signing of a peace treaty. Access to Syria's 14 million consumers is becoming a much coverted prize, the report adds.



The authors of the report point out that while great opportunities exist in Syria, navigating through the local business environment is not always easy and requires both preparation and patience. For outsiders, the intricacies of Syrian business, including a multiple exchange rate system, complex trading procedures and inadequate banking facilities, can be bewildering.

The report suggests that in both sectors of the economy, sales are complicated by a local propensity to negotiate until the last possible minute. Designed for audiences in Europe, it says that Western approaches of straight forward price quotations are unlikely to succeed in an environment where repeated price reductions are both customary and expected. In tenders, practices and regulations that are unusual in the West but common throughout the region can prolong negotiations and lead to unexpected results.

The final section of the book is a business directory listing all the names and addresses of foreign embassies, hotels, restaurants, airlines and important ministries. The guide is published by the Oxford Business Guide in the UK. ■

Australian meat gets top marks in Jordan

By Harry Pullens
Special to The Star

ON THE occasion of Eid Al Adha, the Australian ambassador in Amman, Merry Wickes, donated 100 head of sheep to the Jordanian Zakat Fund. The donation was made on behalf of the Australian government and Australian Meat and live stock Corp., (AMLC) in Amman. It was received by Mr Abdullah Al Shobaki, the fund director.

Ms Wicks explains that the donation was given to the society especially in appreciation of the warm reception enjoyed by Australians in the Kingdom and as a way to strengthen the bilateral trade relations between the two countries.

"We feel like a part of Jordan as we have always been made to feel at home here," she told *The Star*. "We are happy to share in the country's celebration by donating 100 sheep to the needy people of Jordan".

Mr Richard Martin, the regional manager of AMLC said the donation is "small but very important." He explained that the 100 sheep which are currently at the Hijazi Ghosheh farm in Azraq arrived on a recent shipment from Australia.

He noted that trade between Jordan and Australia, which gained momentum in 1990, has been moving "very quickly". The main features of the bilateral trade agreements between the two countries are export of the Kingdom's phosphate to Australia and import of meat and dairy products from Australia, he added.

Jordan is the second largest market for Australian sheep. It imported 1.4 million sheep last year of its total export of six million. With the Health's Ministry ban on British and Irish beef and dairy products in 1990, Australia became the principal supplier of meat and dairy products to the Kingdom.

This supply, Mr Martin explained, has been achieved through the commitments of importers such as Hijazi Ghosheh, who is one of the biggest importers of live stock from Australia; the Australian meat and live-stock industry, as well as the Ministry of Agriculture and Supply in Jordan.

Within the context of the trade deal between the two nations, Australia imported 3,000 tons of phosphate in 1995.

Last month, AMLC, which officially opened an office in Amman in 1995, organized a two-day workshop on meat inspection and handling.

The Principal Technical Officer of the Middle East, David Jones, explained that the AMLC deals with numerous vet departments around the region. The aim of the workshop was to boost relations, and to guarantee security mainly on the theoretical and practical aspects of the meat trade.



Australian Ambassador, Ms Wickes, presents donation to Zakat Director, Mr Al Shobaki. Photo by Fouad Ibsur

Mr Jones who travels between Bahrain and Jordan is currently here in the country with Dr Neil Buchanan to represent AMLC at a seminar on *Meat and Dairy Food* organized by the University of Science and Technology in Irbid.

The participation of the AMLC in the two-day seminar, which just finished, included veterinary experts, students, consumers and officials from meat associations was aimed at improving relations between the meet industry in Australian and Jordan.

"We are very happy to participate in this workshop as we are really trying to expand this cooperation in the meat trade" said Jones. ■

More emerging economies seen opening economic data to world

By Jon Schaffer
USIA Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—A growing number of major emerging-market countries are opening up their economies to greater public scrutiny, according to a new report by the Institute of International Finance (IIF).

The report, issued April 9 by the group that represents major international banking concerns.

Rated highly by the IIF for data coverage, frequency and timeliness are reports from the Czech Republic, Israel, Peru, Philippines, South Korea and Turkey, as well as Mexico, the country whose 1994-1995 economic crisis precipitated demands for reform in country reporting.

Another 12 countries have almost as high performance, the report said.

However, the data provided in the report suggest that China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Kuwait, Morocco and Saudi Arabia fell considerably short of IIF standards.

Altogether the IIF report covers 28 emerging market economies that received net private capital flows of about $180,000 million in 1995. Having published its standards in September 1995, the IIF has been cooperating as the IMF works up its own standards.

"Several countries are improving data systems, including the provision of data through the Internet, and have indicated their intention to continue advancing the process," said William Cline, IIF's deputy managing director and chief economist, in a statement released with the report.

The IIF's standards call for weekly, monthly or quarterly reporting on 18 categories of data: national economic output, expenditure, consumer price inflation, trade, current account, capital account, reserves, public borrowers, private borrowers, short-term debt, amortization, monetary survey (net, foreign assets, credit to the public and private sectors), money supply, domestic credit, interest rates, government budget, public sector borrowing and central bank balance sheet.

The IIF report found the most important problems are lack of reporting on external debt and long time lags in releasing fiscal, national expenditure and external liabilities data.

Separately, the IMF's executive board is scheduled to vote April 12 on the types of data it will seek from its more than 170 member countries. It then plans to make public on the Internet which countries do and do not meet the IMF data standards, an IMF spokesman said.

The lack of reliable economic and financial data about Mexico prior to the 1994-95 crisis prompted the Group of Seven (G-7) industrial nations to urge the IMF to come up with reporting standards. ■

Jordanian delegation concludes successful mission to Pakistan

THE SIXTH session of the Pakistan-Jordan Joint Economic Commission was held in Islamabad, Pakistan on April 16-17. The Jordanian delegation was led by Dr Nabil Ammari, secretary general of the Ministry of Planning.

In his opening statement, Dr Ammari said that Jordan was keen to develop economic cooperation with Pakistan through join ventures in the fields of garments, pharmaceutical and automobile spare-parts.

He emphasized the need to exchange visit of businessmen to organize industrial exhibitions and meetings between the chamber of industries and trade associations of both countries.

Dr Ammari also expressed the need for cooperation in civil aviation and tourism and to increase cooperation in research, training and technology between the two countries.

Mr Javed Talat, secretary of the Economic Affairs Division and head of the Pakistan's delegation stated that the bilateral economic relations needed to be strengthened for mutual benefit in order to exploit fully the potential existing between the two countries. He also said that the Pakistan-Jordan Joint Economic Commission is a useful forum to identify new opportunities of cooperation.

The two sides signed two important agreements. This was an Executive Program for Cultural Cooperation and an Economic Cooperation agreements between Pakistan's Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Jordan's Chamber of Industry and Chamber of Commerce. The session was also attended by Pakistan's Ambassador to Jordan, Mr Ali Sarwar Naqvi, and Jordan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr Yasin Istanbouli. ■

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MARKET WATCH

20-23 April

Highest and lowest performing stocks in the Amman Financial Market

SATURDAY	%	SUNDAY	%	MONDAY	%	TUESDAY	%
+ Commercial Industry	4.44	+ United Land Development	4.21	+ JIMCO	4.88	+ Intermediate Petro-Chemicals	5.13
+ Middle East Bank	3.54	+ Amman Investment Bank	3.64	+ United Track Owners	4.51	+ Arab Investment & Trade	4.93
+ National Portfolio Securities	3.45	+ JIMCO	2.50	+ Universal Industry	4.05	+ JIMCO	4.65
+ Jordan-French Insurance	5.19	+ Universal Industry	5.00	+ Arab Medical Supplies	5.48	+ Jordan Pipes Industry	3.51
+ Intermediate Petro-Chemicals	5.15	+ Jordan Industry Supplies	4.76	+ United Investment Bank	4.91	+ Jordan National Bank	2.58
+ Universal Industry	5.11	+ Intermediate Petro-Chemicals	4.65	+ Commercial Industry	4.90	+ Middle East Complex	2.78

General Price Pointer	152.280	151.900	150.460	150.030
Trade Volume	993009	1871305	578239	1137411
Stock Volume	634895	717128	432913	737237
Highest Traded Stocks				
+ Arab Bank	128.090	+ Arab Bank 726.340	+ Arab Bank 50.400	+ Arab Bank 276.675

All data provided by ACCESS Tel: 646868 Fax: 646949

Palestine Post

Edited by Awni Abu Ghosh

Hamas's new move

HAMAS DRIVE to become part of the official Palestinian structures goes back to the Intifada. Though its wish didn't materialize because of political differences with Fatah, this move towards integration have gained momentum, especially after the election of the Fatah-dominated legislative council in the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Although Hamas boycott the January elections, its followers and sympathisers had a different opinion. Many of the Hamas supporters took part in the ballots, and voted for those who they trust, irrespective of the candidate's political orientation.

As a result, a distance was created between the leadership and its grass-roots organizations. Later, it developed into a difference in approach between Hamas's political leadership and its military wing. The divergence between the two wings have deepened as the PNC of the PLO—which integrates the elected 88 legislative council members—is convened for the first time on Palestinian soil and under the PNA where Hamas has no representation.

Hence, Hamas new attempt to take its place in the Palestinian people's legitimate bodies is not odd. Negotiations with Fatah on this matter never ceased. On the contrary, they were frequent in the few months before the January elections and after it. The lack of agreement between the two movements was due to differences in Hamas. The recent measures taken by the PNA against some Hamas activists testify to its willingness to cooperate with the political leadership of Hamas. This doesn't and shouldn't imply that the PNA and Hamas are in harmony or agreement on the current issues facing the Palestinian people or on the negotiation process with Israel. But it points to the potential integration of the Palestinian forces on the main national cause, especially before the final stage of negotiation with Israel.

Quotas as a factor of difference between Hamas and the Palestinian leadership in the past have no significance today since plurality and general elections are institutionalized in the PNA areas. What is practical is their convergence to build a multi-party system which cannot exclude Hamas. ■

Shell-shocked families search for their relatives

By Nicholas Goldberg
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

SIDON, Lebanon—Ahmed Dib's 6-year-old son had his leg amputated and surgery performed on his stomach last Friday—but Dib could not be with him.

Dib's wife died in the Israeli attack on the UN base at Qana, Lebanon, Thursday. His three other children are missing—and are most likely dead. Until he's sure, he won't stop looking.

He had 15 hospitals to check, just in the city of Sidon. In the surrounding villages there were more. Then there are hospitals in Tyre and Nikoura to the south, and in Beirut to the north.

That left little Mohammed alone, lying in his bed without a leg, bruised from shrapnel from head to toe and covered in bandages and tubes. His aunt was with him some of the time. He asked for an occasional cup of soda, but otherwise lay quietly. The doctors examined him, but a quick walk down the halls of the hospital showed that he was not their top priority.

"He looks pale, but I think he'll be all right," one doctor said. "That's more than you can say for many of them."

On the day after the deadly Israeli attack on a refugee-filled UN base here, Ahmed Dib is only one of hundreds of shell-shocked family members looking frantically for their relatives.

The task is made more complicated by the fact that many of the bodies in the hospitals—live ones as well as dead ones—are impossible for the authorities to identify, and are being distinguished only by numbers. "We don't know their names, so we've just numbered them all—one, two, three, and so on," said Mouin Abouzahr, the assistant director of the Labid Medical Center in Sidon. Like most of the hospitals here, there is a shortage of refrigerator space for the corpses.

At most of the hospitals, people are crowded in the halls, waiting for information, offering pictures and descriptions of their missing relatives. At Hammoud Hospital, relatives blocked the way of an incoming ambulance and nearly rioted in an effort to find out who was inside. Lena Rifai, the woman at the front desk, said 50 or 60 people had been trying to locate family members during the 2 1/2 hours she had been on duty. "I looked in every hospital in Tyre and Sidon," said Shauki Balhas, a 45-year-old tobacco farmer who is missing his wife and five of his children—but whose 11-year-old son, Hassan, is at Hammoud with shrapnel lodged in his brain. "I asked by name, and I described my children, but I haven't found them."

The stories of the families here are remarkably similar. They are mostly from farming villages near the UN post at Qana. Most have lived there all their lives, as their parents and grandparents did. Spouses met there and despite everything, they intend to go back. For most, like Dib and Balhas, war is nothing new. Most have been refugees two or three or four times before, during the 1982 Israeli invasion and the 1993 "Seven Day War" with Israel, among other times.



The Israeli onslaught is a nightmare on children

"Where do you want us to go?" asked Dib's sister, Siknidi. "We have no other homes, no other place to go. Our only work is on the land."

Dib, who raises livestock on his property just three miles from the Israeli-occupied zone, has been driven from his home three times in the past, but this time he refused to flee because he didn't want to leave his goats. When the shelling began, however, he sent his wife and four children to safety at the nearby UN post. Balhas went with his family to Qana for the same reason.

"I thought it would be safe there," he said. "They wouldn't dare hit the United Nations."

In the end, however, it was the worst possible choice.

On the hospital corridor, many people are unconscious, in comas, on respirators or far too deeply drugged to tell their stories. Mohammed Dib is too young. Hassan Balhas, who is writhing on his bed, clawing at the mattress with his hand, is in too much pain.

But others are ready to talk, eager to describe the horror of last Thursday's attack in an effort to send a message to the United States—which they view as Israel's closest ally and virtually complicit in the killings—about what has happened.

Abbas Nasrallah, a 31-year-old carpenter who was interviewed just 15 minutes after having his leg amputated, remembers the glass shattering and the shells coming in one after another.

"I remember a guy turning to me and saying, 'Why are they shooting at us. I want to take a Kalashnikov (rifle) and go out to fight them,'" said Nasrallah. "That man was the first to get hit. He was blown to pieces."

When Nasrallah was hit, he remembers his leg being "twisted the wrong way." Then a wooden structure above him collapsed on top of him.

"I have a message to the leader of the world, the United States of America," Shauki Balhas said. "You talk about terrorism, but you should see Israeli terrorism. It is killing our innocent people and our children." ■

Qana, a tragedy waiting to happen

By Marjorie Miller and John Daniszewski
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

JERUSALEM—On the first day of Operation Grapes of Wrath, Israel's air force fired "smart bombs" at three windows on the first floor of a 10-story building in a Beirut neighborhood of high-rises, and showed the world aerial photographs of their high-tech precision firing.

Last Thursday, Israel fired 155-mm cannon shells at rocket launchers be onging to Hezbollah guerrillas in southern Lebanon, missing its target by a distance of three football fields. This time, the pictures broadcast across the world were shocking mounds of dead refugees at a UN camp in flames.

The killing of more than 98 civilians in Qana prompted President Clinton to back off his nearly unqualified support for the Israeli operation. Clinton's call for a cease-fire is not yet bearing fruit.

The Israeli military has gone into high gear to defend itself, blaming the tragedy on Hezbollah.

But still the world is left with two starkly contrasting images, and wondering how Israel's high-tech military could have been so stunningly accurate in the first attack and so deadly wrong in the latter. The Israeli shells landed more than 300 yards away from their target Thursday; how did this accident happen?

To begin with, there is a radical difference in the kind of weapons used in the two attacks. Neither is meant for fighting the kind of hit-and-run guerrilla war that Hezbollah is waging, but the fighter jets and helicopter gunships the Israelis used in Beirut are at least precision weapons, whereas the artillery used on Qana—155-mm self-propelled howitzers—is known to be far less accurate.

In that sense, the incident at Qana appeared to some military observers as a tragedy waiting to happen. In the days leading up to the tragedy, the Israeli army had fired at least 9,000 artillery shells at suspected guerrilla positions in or near southern Lebanese villages, and only a handful landed on Hezbollah military targets. The rest landed in an area where tens of thousands of civilians remained.

With such a rain of powerful shells, said Mikael Lindvall, a spokesman for the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, or UNIFIL, "the room for accidents gets smaller and smaller."

The commander of UNIFIL, Gen. Stanislaw Wozniak, said Shahak had apologized to him and said "human error" was to blame for the shelling of the UN base.

Wozniak said that was no excuse for the attack. "Simply, you don't attack civilians," he said during a visit to the base. "You don't attack UN positions."

Timor Goksel, spokesman for the 4,500-member UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon, said Israeli officials have told them the soldiers "overshot" their target.

Goksel said that at about 1:55 pm last Thursday, Hezbollah guerrillas fired two katyusha rockets and eight heavy mortars from a small graveyard 380 yards south of the UN post. Eighteen minutes later, he said, Israel let loose a barrage of artillery fire "without warning," and five or six shells fell on the compound where about 800 civilians had been camped since the Israeli operation began.

The shells exploded in a blast of shrapnel and heat-turned-fire that claimed at least 98 dead and 100 wounded.

"The explanation they are giving us is that they double-and triple-checked before firing. They know this (Hezbollah) position was about 350 meters from a UN post, but they thought they had an adequate safety margin. ... They say the artillery overshot," Goksel said.

Normally, a 155-mm shell falls within about 50 yards of its target—not 380 yards, military experts say. How or why Israeli soldiers overshot the target is unclear, and Israeli Defense Forces spokesmen declined to discuss specifics of the case.

During Operation Grapes of Wrath, the Israeli army unveiled new radar for identifying the launch point of a katyusha rocket within seconds after it fires. The location is put on a digital map at the command post and transferred by computer to the cannon batteries, which quickly fire at the launcher.

According to Avihai Beker, a military analyst for the Tel Aviv newspaper *Maariv*, "The whole process from the moment of the launching of the katyusha until the firing of the shells toward the launcher is extremely short."

"A very few minutes," added David Agmon, a reserve brigadier general also writing in *Maariv*. "If the katyusha launcher remains at the launching site for longer than those few minutes, it will be hit."

At Qana, no katyusha launchers were hit. One military source groping to explain the accidental deaths said the mistake was sad but, unfortunately, not uncommon.

The total number of deaths as a result of Israeli attacks are 159. The injured are 330 people, most of these were women, children and the elderly.■

Despite dangers, many decide not to evacuate

By John Daniszewski
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

BUJUT AL SIYAD, Lebanon—For the people of this hamlet of about 30 families, nestled in the hills south of Tyre and about a mile from Israel's self-styled "security zone," life during the past week has been moments of intense fear and long hours of anxious waiting.

Israeli shells explode day and night, fired in response to rockets launched by Hezbollah guerrillas from surrounding fields and orchards. The blasts kick up dirt and smoke and send tremors throughout the villagers' neat stuccoed homes.

But like thousands of people in the war zone that southern Lebanon has become, Jamal Zabad said he prefers to cling close to home, however dangerous that might be, rather than take his wife and children and expose his family to an uncertain life as a refugee in his own country.

"It's my village. It's my people. It's my house. That's why I stay," the stonecutter said with conviction, shortly after declining a ride to Tyre with the first UN convoy to successfully make its way up the winding country lane to his village since the Israeli reprisals began 11 April.

Escorted by machine-gun-toting Irish soldiers in a white UN armored personnel carrier, the convoy delivered provisions including bottled water, canned tuna, powered milk, flat bread and dried beans earlier this week and then moved on.

The devastating attack on a UN compound in nearby Qana, which killed more than 98 civilians, brought into sharp focus an unhappy fact: Even though Israel had urged residents of southern Lebanon to evacuate the region for their own safety, a significant minority has been unable or unwilling to do so.

The attachment to the land of the rural, mostly Shiite Muslim population in the face of massive bombardment helps explain why civilian casualties have mounted steadily—with scores killed in homes, in cars and even in the UN compound—in an area where Israel had hoped to face only Hezbollah.

Over the course of nine days, UN officials in Lebanon say, more than 15,000 shells have landed in southern Lebanon in response to about 300 Hezbollah missiles launched by the elusive guerrillas into northern Israel.

Bujut al Siyad is typical of the battle zone. Villagers said they have been caught in the middle as Katyusha rockets arched overhead, to be answered within minutes by the Israelis' howitzers raining in from the south.

Those left here give many reasons for staying: the need to tend to their animals, lack of transportation, their attachment to their homes or the fear of illness, poverty or hunger if they become refugees. ■

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Hezbollah rebels vow to keep fighting

By Nicholas Goldberg
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

AMARIYEH CHECKPOINT, Lebanon—It is here at night and early in the morning that Hezbollah guerrillas creep in, sometimes on donkeys or motorcycles or in Toyota pickup trucks, carrying Russian-made Katyusha rockets they fire across the border into the villages of northern Israel.

It is here that the Israelis fire back, hitting houses or cars a few minutes later in their efforts to kill the guerrillas. On Thursday, not far away, the Israelis missed their target again, hitting a tentful of refugees, killing more than 100 people.

On a recent visit to this bucolic area, four Katyushas were launched from the dense orange groves along the coastal road. The retaliatory artillery blasts shook the ground, uprooting trees and carving deep craters in the pavement. But the counterbarrage appeared to have had little or no effect: No one was hit, and by the next day, Katyushas were again flying.

"We are not going to stop our fighting, because we are fighting to liberate our land," said one Hezbollah supporter. "How can we stop now, when Israel is still occupying our country?"

"These days, we are all Hezbollah," said Ahmed Ajami, a member of the Lebanese Parliament who was visiting the besieged waterfront city of Tyre last week.

For more than a decade, these groves and the surrounding hills and fields of southern Lebanon have been the primary battleground in a low-level war between Israel and Hezbollah, an Iranian-backed band of Islamic militants.

In one sense, it is a very unbalanced war: Mules against tanks, 1950s-vintage Katyushas vs state-of-the-art weapons, and several thousand guerrillas vs one of the world's best-equipped armies.

Despite that, Hezbollah has refused to give in. During the past two weeks, despite more than 350 air attacks and 15,000 artillery rounds fired by the Israelis into south Lebanon, Hezbollah guerrillas have managed to fire more than 500 Katyushas into Israel and the Israeli-occupied "security zone." More than 150 people have died in the fighting, but only a handful of Hezbollah guerrillas have been killed.

"They haven't crushed Hezbollah, and I don't think they can," said Timur Goksel, the senior political adviser at the headquarters of the UN peacekeeping force in the security zone.

Despite high hopes for an imminent cease-fire in the two-week-long Israeli offensive to crush Hezbollah, it is not clear that the underlying problems will be resolved. Israel is unlikely to withdraw in the near future from the nine-mile wide strip of Lebanon it has occupied since 1982. And although both sides may promise to stop attacking civilian areas, Hezbollah is unlikely to quit.

Hezbollah—the Shiite Muslim-dominated "Party of God"—is a classic guerrilla band, operating in and around the villages of southern Lebanon. Although armed and funded by Iran, the organization is deeply integrated into the community, and, by and large, has been supported by the community since it began fighting in 1985 to drive Israel off Lebanese territory.

In addition to a military wing, the organization runs schools and health clinics and has eight representatives in the 128-member Lebanese Parliament. Hezbollah also compensates families of those killed or wounded in operations against Israel, and even has its own construction company—Jihad Al Binaa—that rebuilds houses destroyed in the fighting.

Still, despite the widespread public support for the organization, its individual guerrilla members are carefully hidden.

"Hezbollah? No, we have no Hezbollah here," said one man in the village of Deyout al-Siad, near the fields where Katyushas are regularly fired at Israeli army positions. Said another: "I don't know what's going on in the fields. I hear Katyushas going in the night, but I don't know anything about it."

According to official sources in Lebanon, the military wing has an elusive core group of 400 or 500 full-time operatives who plan and carry out the more serious operations: the roadside bombs and ambushes against Israeli soldiers in the occupied zone that cause serious casualties. They wear civilian clothes and never carry weapons publicly, but insiders know them, according to Goksel, by the Yamaha motorcycles they're partial to. Their intelligence information is good, they know where the enemy is and where he's going.

In addition, there is a secondary level of several thousand part-time fighters—students and farmers, mostly—who launch Katyushas and mortars with little accuracy into the security zone and into Kiryat Shemona and other villages in northern Israel. Their rockets often cause no casualties and little damage, but they drive residents down into the bomb shelters.

Most sources say the Israeli Defense Forces have a good intelligence apparatus in southern Lebanon, including Lebanese collaborators who give information about Hezbollah and its fighters. The IDF also has the proxy South Lebanon Army fighting with them.



But this time, Israel has had a hard time—despite assurances that their top concern is to protect civilian lives—pinpointing their attacks to Hezbollah targets. On the first day of the offensive, for instance, the Israeli army said it hit a Hezbollah base in the Bekaa Valley. In fact, Hezbollah had already moved the base and the Israeli bombs claimed only a garbage dump. So far in the war, no senior Hezbollah leaders have been killed.

"It gives us great satisfaction to see the Israelis and the Americans at a loss as to how to deal with a group of true believers," said Naim Qassem, Hezbollah's second-in-command during an interview with Lebanese journalists last week.

The difficulty of defeating a band of determined zealots that has the support of the community around them has led some to question what exactly Israel hopes to win by pounding the villages of southern Lebanon. Perhaps it would be wiser, say many diplomats and UN officials, to simply give them what they want by withdrawing from the nine-mile-wide security zone. If Israel were to do so, Hezbollah officials insist they would stop fighting, and many believe the Lebanese and Syrian governments would help maintain the peace.

"My sense is that their primary interest is in their own community in south Lebanon," said William Quandt, a University of Virginia professor who was a senior Middle East policymaker at the State Department for many years. "If the Israelis weren't there, then I think Hezbollah would stop."

But Israeli officials don't believe it.

"Hezbollah would not be satisfied with our withdrawal," said Uri Lubrani, the Israeli official in charge of southern Lebanon policy. "They're acting on instructions from Iran, based on Iran's political agenda. Iran has rejected the right of Israel to exist and has called on all the countries in the Islamic world to do whatever they can to enhance the destruction of Israel."

Israel's strategy during the past two weeks has been somewhat more complex than simply pounding Hezbollah out of existence. Instead, they have hoped to put pressure on the Lebanese and Syrian governments—by driving hundreds of thousands of refugees into the north and bombing infrastructure targets such as electric power plants—to rein Hezbollah in. In the days ahead, they hope to bring the major parties to the table to work out a deal.

"We have no territorial claims on Lebanon whatsoever," Lubrani said. "It's only a matter of security. And a precondition for withdrawal is that the military capabilities of Hezbollah and other terrorist groups be dismantled." ■

Sino-Russian ties blossom in a marriage of convenience

By Rone Tempest
LA Times- Washington Post News Service

BEIJING—Earlier this month, 20 eminent Kremlinologists—steeped in years of intrigue between China and the former Soviet Union—assembled secretly here in the Chinese capital to ponder and discuss the upcoming Russian presidential election.

According to some of the scholars who attended the meeting at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences April 8, about half the group favored the chances of Communist Party candidate Gennady A. Zyuganov to defeat incumbent free-marketeer Boris Yeltsin in the Russian vote. The other half favored Yeltsin, who began a three-day, high-profile visit to China that ends tomorrow Friday.

But while the scholars' political prognostications differed, the consensus on the importance of Russia's election for China was far more revealing. No matter who wins the June 16 presidential vote, the scholars concluded, China's basic interests will not be affected greatly.

"In principle, whoever wins won't matter much for Sino-Russian relations," said Pan Deli, an expert who participated in the closed-door meeting at China's leading think tank.

The "What-me-worry?" consensus reflects the atmosphere of political pragmatism that now characterizes Sino-Russian relations. Not since the Communist solidarity era of the 1950s have the two giant neighbors been less openly suspicious of the other.

And even in the halcyon 1950s, when the two worker states were cooperating on a broad range of industrial projects and the Chinese Communists called their Soviet counterparts "older brother," the friendship may have been more cosmetic than it is today. Soviet leader Josef Stalin made no attempt to mask his dislike for Mao Tse-tung. Mao, in turn, despised Nikita S. Khrushchev.

Moreover, today China and Russia are increasingly motivated by another common interest—their growing disaffection with US international leadership.

"It's the Americans who are bringing them closer," a European diplomat here said. "The Russians feel shunted aside by the US. The Chinese feel persecuted, particularly on human rights, and need partners. For both of them it is useful to demonstrate to the outside world that they can get along."

Most diplomats here doubt that the marriage of convenience will result in a true love fest, with China and Russia ganging up against the United States in the broader geopolitical arena. Serious problems continue, particularly in Russia's sparsely populated Far East, where an estimated 200,000 illegal Chinese immigrants have spooked the local population into a panic about being swamped by a tide of people from neighboring Manchuria.

"It's overstepping to say that the Chinese are playing the Russian card against the US," another Western diplomat here said. "In both countries, there is still a healthy degree of mistrust."

But Western military experts will be watching closely what kind of arms contracts Yeltsin and Chinese President Jiang Zemin announce after their fourth summit in four years. To boost his presidential campaign, Yeltsin needs to go back home with some fat contracts.

The Chinese are expected to announce the purchase of another batch of advanced SU-27 fighter aircraft worth more than $2.5 billion and conclude an agreement that would allow the Chinese to assemble their own aircraft under Russian license. Other rumored military sales involve missile frigates and Kilo-class attack submarines.

Bilateral trade, which last year reached $5.5 billion, is more important to the Russians than the Chinese. China is Russia's second-largest trading partner, behind Germany. China does more trade with eight other countries, including the tiny city-state of Singapore.

But the numbers could change radically after next week's visit. The two countries are likely to unveil a huge pipeline project to transport natural gas from Siberia to the Yellow Sea. And the Russians lust after a bigger piece of the Three Gorges Dam project on the Yangtze River, China's biggest undertaking since the construction of the Great Wall.

In historic terms, the high point of Yeltsin's visit is likely to come today Thursday in Shanghai when Yeltsin, Jiang and the leaders of three northern border states—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan— sign a far-reaching border demarcation treaty that in principle solves many of the outstanding issues along the long northern frontier. ■



Russia's President BORIS YELTSIN

Entrepreneur builds Chinese on-line network

By Keith B. Richburg
LA Times- Washington Post News Service

BEIJING—One couple wants tips on how to make a baby. Another wants advice on getting a divorce. And two people fell in love and plan to tie the knot.

It's all part of the ongoing conversation on CompuNet, China's small, but increasingly popular, answer to American network services like CompuServe and America Online. If the graphics and icons look similar, that's because they are —CompuNet mastermind Zhang Shuxin says she got the idea for the local on-line service while traveling around the United States.

"You've got CompuServe and America Online—this is China on-line," said Zhang, who uses the English name Jasmine. "I'm not a computer nerd," she said. "I was just thinking that communication in China has a lot of difficulties because of the distance. But if you want to make this service in China, it has to be in Chinese."

Zhang, at 33, might be something of a modern-day Chinese revolutionary. As head of the new company, called 1+Net, and CompuNet, its dial-up service, she and her engineer husband are storming the ramparts of the Chinese Communist Party's once impenetrable official control of information.

A few other providers, including the government-run ChinaNet, offer full access to the global Internet. But the Beijing-based CompuNet offers users more, and with Chinese-language software.

CompuNet includes updated stock market reports from Shanghai and Shenzhen, discussion groups for parents, a job database, a dating service for young people who meet and chat on-line, an electronic magazine with sports news and a site where art students can advertise works for sale. On-line users can browse a bookshop and make purchases, and an on-line entertainment center is being developed to check concert listings and purchase tickets.

Beijing's first known cybercafe, which opened in January on the mezzanine floor of the city's concert hall. After shows, young people gather over cups of coffee to log on, send e-mail and surf the various CompuNet sites.

Zhang said about 2,000 people regularly use CompuNet, and she expects that to grow. Although the number of personal computers in private homes is very limited, a lot of people have access to computers at work and at universities. Zhang says she knows one couple who met through the network—they've asked her to attend their wedding.

Another of Zhang's ideas is Beijing's first known cybercafe, which opened in January on the mezzanine floor of the city's concert hall. After shows, young people gather over cups of coffee to log on, send e-mail and surf the various CompuNet sites.

The cybercafe has four IBM-compatible desktop personal computers, and Zhang lets anyone sign on for free as a way of generating interest. "This has become like a public telephone—it's a public computer," she said. "Anybody can come, anybody can use."

Other free computers are available at her showroom on the western edge of the city. People drop in to log on, and for those without home or office computers, there is a reception desk for dropping off handwritten e-mail messages for posting. E-mail has become the most popular. ■

Veterans of Bay of Pigs recall defense of socialism

By Douglas Farah
LA Times- Washington Post News Service

PLAYA GIRON, Cuba—Santos Garcia was only 16 when he was rushed into military service to defend the Bay of Pigs against an invasion by US-backed forces seeking to overthrow the Marxist government of Fidel Castro. But Garcia remembers the events of 35 years ago as if they were yesterday.

"I was part of the militias that were ordered to cut off the highway taken by the mercenaries, and the enemy planes flew over us," said Garcia, 51, as he accompanied about 1,200 people who arrived by bicycle here Friday to celebrate the anniversary of the defeat of the invasion force. "They bombed and strafed us for 30 minutes. The enemy was able to get through on the road, but we pursued them. We suffered 36 wounded and one dead, but we defeated them."

Garcia, who like other veterans wore medals commemorating his participation, rode for three days on his bicycle with a group of young people to get to the festivities. On the back of his bike, Garcia carried the original flag of his battalion, the 144th.

"The young people asked me to go with them, and I accepted," Garcia said proudly. "I want to transmit the spirit of heroism and struggle from our generation to this generation."

While the 1961 invasion of this beach by CIA-organized Cuban exiles—a fiasco for the three-month-old administration of John F. Kennedy—is now just a historical footnote, it is celebrated here as the defining moment of the Cuban revolution, the time of triumph over the United States.

The invasion 90 miles southeast of Havana began 17 April, and the fighting ended 19 April with the capture of hundreds who participated in the CIA-sponsored force, made up principally of Cuban exiles. Some 161 Cubans and 107 exiles died in battle, and more than 1,000 anti-Castro troops were taken prisoner and later ransomed to the United States.

The area here has been turned into a tourist resort, with monuments to each fallen Cuban combatant. A sign at the entrance to the town declares it is the site of "The First Defeat of Imperialism in Latin America," and another proclaims "Yesterday, today and forever, socialism or death."

The region's main attraction is a well-kept museum, housing weapons, an airplane, a tank and scores of documents of the fighting. The walls are filled with copies of black-and-white photographs of the battle, faded combat orders and newspapers, and texts and maps showing how the fighting developed. Several rows of glass cases display personal effects—watches, knives, wallets and money—of those killed in the fighting.

This year, the celebration of Playa Giron, as the Bay of Pigs area is called here, takes on an added meaning: Officials of both countries say US-Cuban relations have deteriorated to their lowest point in three decades.

The current crisis was precipitated 24 February when Cuba shot down two civilian light airplanes belonging to the Cuban exile group Brothers to the Rescue. Four were killed. The group, which had flown over Havana several times recently, said the airplanes were searching the sea for Cubans fleeing the country. The government said the airplanes violated Cuban airspace.

In response, President Clinton signed the Helms-Burton bill that tightens the trade embargo on Cuba in 1962, a law the government denounced as another attempt to destroy Cuba's socialist system.

Lately, Castro and other government officials have spoken of the possibility that the US might take military action against Cuba. The celebration here is preliminary to an extravaganza in Havana planned for Labor Day on 1 May, a holiday almost ignored during the economic privations of the last three years. Labor Day's focus, too, is to be on the against the US.

The media in Cuba have reminded people that two days before the 1961 invasion, US planes bombed the island in an effort to destroy the air force, killing seven people. The next day Castro announced the Cuban revolution was socialist, and his government then became a firm Soviet ally.

"Now we have before us not the mercenaries of Giron, but another type... who are more dangerous, who want to tighten the blockade, make it more difficult for us," Castro said in a speech that was part of the 35th anniversary fete.

State television has run several hours of special programming on the invasion, much of it showing the young Castro, with giving speeches and directing the fighting. It also shown films of captured exiles.

Last Friday, thousands, many of whom were not even born when the invasion took place, mixed with scores of veterans such as Garcia as they listened to speeches by Communist Party officials and to the recollections of former combatants, all followed by live music at an outdoor dance.

Garcia, talking to a group of young people, told how he and his team went through the scrub brush in the surrounding area, capturing invaders and dodging bullets.

"It was my first chance to defend socialism," Garcia said. "When Fidel declared we were socialist, I really didn't know what socialism was, but I went to Giron believing it was worth defending, and I was right."

Echoing the government line, Garcia said he was staying prepared for a possible US attack and was also helping keep young people on their toes. ■

The new 'Seven Wonders'

● **It's still a wonderful world, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers, which recently named the Seven Wonders of the Modern World.**

Chosen were marvels built this century that have overcome damning engineering challenges or benefited humanity:

1) Europe's Channel Tunnel.
2) Toronto's CN Tower.
3) New York's Empire State Building.
4) San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.
5) South America's Itaipu Dam.
6) Netherlands North Sea Protection Works.
7) Panama Canal.

Archeologist searches for ancient roads in Mexico

By Myrna Oliver
LA Times- Washington Post News Service

CALUKMUL, Mexico—William J. "Willie" Folan is looking for a 2,000-year-old road. Several of them.

An American archeologist who works for the Universidad Autonoma de Campeche, Folan has been excavating this remote jungle site of a major Mayan city since 1982.

Discovered in 1931 but largely ignored until Folan initiated his work, the Calukmul site is an archeological treasure trove—to date, it has yielded 114 engraved upright stone slabs, called stelae, more than any other Mayan site. With the advances in the last decade in reading Maya-carved pictographs known as glyphs, much can be learned from the carvings on these monuments.

Folan's discoveries, including a surrounding wall to protect the city from invading armies, a major tomb with an intact skeleton named "Long-Lipped Jawbone," and jade and pearl ornaments have shown that Calukmul was a major center with a population of 50,000 and at least 6,250 structures, rivaling and warring with the early Mayan city of Tikal in what is now Guatemala.

He is now searching for evidence to support his long-held theory that Maya "sacbes" ("sac" meaning "white" and "be" meaning "road" and pronounced SOCK-BAY) not only provided concourse within urban areas but also stretched to distant cities, linking states or regions.

Proving the theory he has shared with Joyce Marcus of the University of Michigan would mean that political states developed in the Western Hemisphere far earlier than previously thought.

It could also mean the Mayas lived not in isolated cities but in an organized, connected nation, the forerunner of modern society.

Sacbes, 6-foot-high causeways built with stone fill to keep pedestrians above the area's many marshes and swamps in the wet season, have been found as long as about 12 miles in carefully studied Mayan sites such as Uxmal and Chichen Itza. But Folan believes he will find roads connecting Calukmul to such distant centers as Mexico's Coba, about 186 miles to the northeast, and even more certainly to the Guatemalan sites of El Mirador, about 26 miles to the south, and Nakbe, another 7 miles beyond.

Richard D. Hansen, who has excavated El Mirador and Nakbe since 1989 for UCLA's Regional Archaeological Investigation of the North Peten, Guatemala project, is skeptical but hopeful that Folan can prove that such long roads existed.

Hansen has confirmed that Mayan development in the two areas took place centuries before previously thought. His findings have shown that El Mirador was built about 200 B.C. and Nakbe as early as 630 B.C., which would make it the first Mayan city.

Archeologists have believed that Mayas drifted north to Calukmul after the demise of the Guatemalan centers.

But the existence of connecting roads could show that the cities coexisted. Folan believes his research could move back Calukmul's known Classic Maya roots in about A.D. 600 to the Preclassic period a few hundred years B.C.

Although skeptical about the roads, Hansen is as hopeful as Folan about proving that connections of some type linked the ancient cities into a broader society.

"I would love it if he is right," Hansen said during a rare encounter with Folan early this year when the UCLA scientist led the first large group of visitors, organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History and San Francisco's Academy of Science, into Calukmul.

"The reason I have doubts," Hansen said, "is that we have NASA photos of the sacbe system radiating out of El Mirador, and they just go so far and stop. They don't seem to connect to other cities."

Folan began his investigation 12 years ago with remote sensing using Landsat satellite imagery in which variations in vegetation and elevation indicated a pattern of lines radiating from Calukmul. At first he suspected that the lines were canals, but later decided they were roads—the Maya-built sacbes. Unlike Hansen's two-dimensional aerial photos, the remote sensing technique can, by detecting chlorophyll content and other differences, distinguish land from water and natural vegetation from man-made objects such as the missing roads.

The Campeche archeologist, Marcus and W. Frank Miller of Mississippi State University recently published a progress report in the Cambridge Archaeological Journal on their search for the roads. Folan said he soon will publish a map of the road system that has taken him seven years to develop.

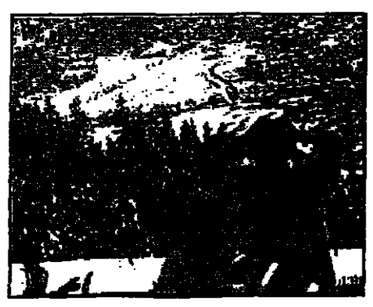
He is now physically slashing through the jungle in an attempt to scrape out the actual roads.

"We want to be damned sure they do what we think they do," he said.

Both Folan and Hansen work deep in the jungle; Folan in Mexico's Calukmul Biosphere Reserve (which he helped establish in 1989) and Hansen in Guatemala's adjoining Maya Biosphere Reserve. They share concerns about dangers such as falling trees and snakebites.

Folan, 63, an American educated at the University of the Americas in Puebla, Mexico, has worked at Mayan sites in Mexico since 1954, and earlier mapped the little-excavated Coba. His efforts are primarily funded by the Mexican government, which according to Hansen and other US scientists views archeology more as a tourist draw than a precise science. Lack of money is a constant worry. ■

Poland prepares to celebrate National Day in Jordan



WITH POLISH National Day a little over a week off, Poles around the world are preparing to celebrate the anniversary of their first constitution. For Poles in Jordan, in addition to remembrance, 3rd May is also a good opportunity for the small community to come together and get to know each other.

"It gives people the opportunity to meet, talk and remember the day," a senior official at the Polish Embassy in Amman said of the National Day. Towards that end, the Polish embassy is preparing to host a gathering of some 300 people, mostly Polish nationals, on 3rd May. The official emphasized that this occasion is not only for Poles in Amman to come together, but for Polish nationals throughout the Kingdom.

Only an estimated two to three hundred Polish nationals currently live in Jordan. Most of these nationals, the senior official pointed out, are women who married Jordanians studying in Poland. He did say that when their children are added, however, this figure does increase. He nonetheless categorizes the community as "rather small."

The third of May, commemorates the anniversary of Poland's first constitution. The Constitution, which was adopted in 1791 also carries significance as it was the first constitution adopted in Europe, and the second—behind the United States—in the world. "It was very democratic at the time," the embassy official said of the original 18 century document. Today, in its sixth constitution, and seventh expected to be completed next year, Poland celebrates the day with family gatherings and remembrances.

"Usually we organize small meetings to commemorate the conditions of the first Constitution," the embassy official said of how the day is marked in Poland. He pointed out that no special meals are prepared nor are there any special festivities. "We have no such customs," he added.

A short time after the adoption of the constitution, Poland was divided into three parts by neighbors who were not in agreement with the democratic principles laid out in the Polish Constitution. "It was very sad," the official said of this period. ■

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Gargour honors Wallenius Lines

● The Tawfiq Gargour and Fils Co.. held a reception in the Marriott on the occasion of the holding of the agents conference for the Wallenius Lines. This is a Swedish company that specializes in shipping cars. The Minister of Transport, Mr Nasser Al Lawzi and members of the 15 countries that participated in the conference, attended the reception. The location of the conference was especially chosen by the Wallenius Lines especially because Jordan has an important port in Aqaba.



Photo by Fouad Jbour

Really big on music

By Eyad Ammari
Special to the Star

Playing enthusiastically to a very reactive audience. Big Band performed, at the Hotel Intercontinental, on Tuesday, April 16. The French band was presented by The National Music Conservatory and the French Cultural Centre.

At an almost sold out event, the crowd demanded more and more from Big Band. *The Star* talked to the two band leaders, pianist **Philippe Carment** and saxophonist **Rémi Biet**. "We would have played longer, but we don't like to burn ourselves out," said Biet. "Unfortunately, there was no dancing area. If there were, we might have. There have been times when we played two extra hours." The band didn't play the pieces strictly from the repertoire. They flowed with the mood of the setting. "We play according to the excitement of the audience. We had very thirsty people in the hall," said Carment. There was some disappointment however as some of the audience members were treating the event more like an opera, "they were asking others to shush and stay quiet.... people should come up and dance and shout," added Biet.

The band which won first place at the Big Band Launch of Saint Jean de la Ruelle in 1995 was formed in 1978 by Christian Garros, and formed a name for itself while developing its own style and sound. They have recorded six albums in their history and have appeared on stage in six tours and numerous other performances. They were in Jordan on their seventh tour which started in Syria. The tour is planned to proceed into many other Arab states.

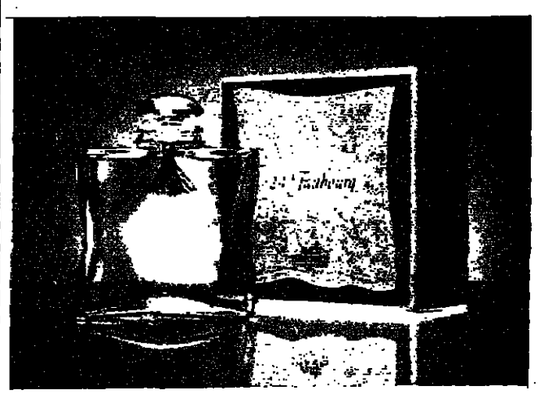
After the death of Garros in 1988, the band was directed by two of its eminent members.

On being asked why the band did not play a single American cover of a Jazz piece considering that Jazz is originally an American style of music, both band leaders both had something to say on the subject. "We have our own Jazz in France," Biet answered plainly. "If we are to play American Jazz, then who would play French Jazz? Jazz in France progressed as fast as American Jazz since it was first played there," added Carment. French Jazz is clearly distinguished from its American counterpart when one listens closely to a piano solo. The pianist tends to rush from tremolos to chord scales while in American Jazz, the pianist plays a series of chords and jumps then goes to the higher pitch notes and plays a long tremolo. This difference carries over to most of the other instruments and the pieces themselves. Being closer to Classical music than the Americans, the French have allowed some elements of classical music to be carried into their Jazz. "I agree that the difference is there," said Biet, but Carment doesn't sense this.

The 18 members of the band played thirteen songs most of which are from their latest album Fin De Set. All of the pieces are written by the band directors, except for a rare cover piece.

Listening to music for two hours, the audience dreaded leaving the hall, even after the band members had left. The National Music Conservatory has several shows coming, if it is any consolation. The Concert Band of the National Music Conservatory is playing in a brunch concert on Friday, April 26; The German Manderling String Quartet is playing on Saturday, May 11; and The Chamber Orchestra of Brigham Young University is playing on Sunday, May 12.■

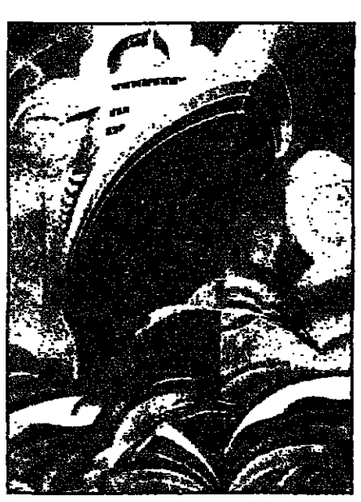
24 Faubourg makes its debut in Amman



Qweider Trading Est. has introduced 24 Faubourg, a new fragrance by Hermes, named after the address of the House of Hermes in Paris. The bottle, made from the finest crystal, is unique in its design which resembles a spread out satin scarf. The fragrance will be sold at a very special rate which is much lower than international prices, to suit local market needs. It will be available in 50 and 100 ml bottles.

Hermes was established in 1937 by **Terry Hermes** and was involved in the manufacture of leather, shoes, and horse riding apparel, as well as horse drawn carriages specially made for Kings and Queens. The company entered the world of perfumes in 1951 with Eau de Hermes, followed by Caleche in 1961, Equipage in 1970, Amazon in 1974, and Bel Ami in 1986. Hermes' search since then for the ultimate fragrance has resulted in 24 Faubourg.■

The Big Red Boat sails on the Internet



The Big Red Boat now has a website on the Internet. The family cruise lines' new site offers cruise information, games, a chance to win a cruise, a recipe for the area's favourite beverage, the Bahama Mama, and 3-D illustrations.

"We believe our home page will entertain consumers while educating them on our cruise product," says Gary Sain, senior vice president of sales & marketing "Then, we want to motivate them to purchase a cruise vacation through our key travel agent partners."

Sain says the site gives the benefits of using a travel agent to assist with planning their cruise package. It also has information for many shore excursion options.

There are activities for children like a coloring contest with the famous Looney Tunes characters which sail on The Big Red Boat. Activities for adults include casino games.

The Big Red Boat pioneered the family cruise line segment in 1984 and now sails two ships on three-and-four-night cruise vacations to the Bahamas. These can be combined with three-and four-night vacations to Walt Disney World.

The Big Red Boat is a subsidiary of The Dial Corp, a Fortune 500 company with $2.6 billion in annual revenues.

Headquartered in Phoenix, the company is best known for its consumer products such as Dial Liquid Antibacterial Soap, Purex Bleach and Renuzit Air Fresheners.■



Juha across three cultures

● *Dr Peter Glade, director of the Goethe Institute gave a lecture earlier this week at Al Ufuq Center in Shmeisani. Dr Glade talked about the folklore figure of Juha, who seems to share a common history in German, Turkish and Arab culture. Dr Glade presented slides to illustrate this character's history in these three societies. Juha has several names it appears. In Germany, he is Till Eulenspiegel in Germany and Nasreddin Hocha in Turkey.*

Tots' Corner

● The Jabour family held a joint celebration for the birthdays of both Mohammed and Fahed this week. Mohammed has just turned five, and his little brother Fahed is now one.



Photo by Fouad Jbour

Orbit shows triumphant at Pan-Arab Awards

Orbit shows have scooped four awards at the *Kolenas* Magazine Annual Readers' Television Awards. Sports, topical cultural and children's shows on Orbit took first prize at the award ceremony held in Cairo on Tuesday night by the Pan-Arab entertainment magazine *Kolenas* and its sister newspaper *Al Aalam Al Youm*.

Based on votes cast by readers of the two publications, Orbit Satellite Television and Radio Network won best sports program for Orbit ESPN's Sports Confrontation, best children's program for the Fun Club on the Fun Channel, best talk show for Ala Al Hawa and best cultural program for Muhakama.

Present to collect the best sport program award was **Yousef Saif**, copresenter with **Khalid Al Harban** of Sports Confronatation, the Orbit-EPN talk show which pulls no punches in its cross-questioning of top names in the world of Arabic sports.

Amy Taylor, host of the Fun Club, Orbit's raucous live children's show, was also present to receive the award for best children's program. With its cast of characters, computer animation and celebrity guests, the Fun Club has built a huge following in the Arab world.

The live Arabic language talk show Ala Al Hawa, broadcasts nightly from Cairo and features guests from the world of politics, arts and entertainment. It broke the mould in Arabic talk shows by injecting vision and originality into the genre and landing the award after only six months on air.

Another ground-breaking program from Orbit Productions, Muhakama - winner of best cultural program - invites key figures from the world of Arabic arts, literature and politics to put a famous figure from history on trial. Often controversial, always insightful, Muhakama has forged a new niche in Arabic television programing.

Commenting on the awards - which were hosted by actress Issad Younes and attended by the Arab world's major broadcasters — Fun Club host Amy Taylor said that "it was wonderful to be among the stars on the night and be recognized for the hard work we have put into the show to make it the best it possibly can be."

In his acceptance speech for Ala Al Hawa, Felix Serhal, Director of Operations, Egypt, said "creating the program was a real challenge, but facing new challenge is what Orbit is all about. We took on that challenge and continue to do so every day that we broadcast live."■

New Havana pour elle

Get ready for a new kind of glamour

Isn't there a moment in life when the need to feel glamorous is almost overpowering. To slip into a slithery black satin evening gown. To wear the highest of heels or dark glasses on a rainy day. Whatever it is the makes you feel glamorous, there is nothing like fragrance to complete the image. Especially when it is new Havena pour Elle, the ultra-glamorous new fragrance created by Aramis.

Havana pour elle which will be launched in May, instantly recalls an era when Hollywood was in its heyday and the kings and queens of the movie world flew to tropical islands to partake of the exotic pleasures they offered. An era when movie stars were larger than life. Men wore evening suits complete with tails, while for women, red lipstic with porcelain skin was de rigeur.

Havana pour elle is without a doubt a fragrance that has "it". That indefinable something that some women just have naturally and some women would just love to have. Certain movie stars come to mind who definitely had "it", **Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner, Marilyn Monroe**. There is no question that these glamorous ladies would have used Havana pour elle... and nothing else!

Havana pour elle is all about dancing lights and mysterious shadows, intriguing nuances and subtle echoes. So different, so distinctive, it takes your breath away. Havana pour elle is a cascade of incredible exotic and unique flowers native to tropical islands such as the West Indies, Jamaica and Brazil, linked with mouth watering tropical fruits and touches of exotic spices that weave and interweave, ebb and flow until it's impossible to tell where it all begins and where it all ends.

At first, an intoxicating interplay of velvety Magnolia blossoms, watery muguet, tasty Casaba Melon and crisp Clementine sparkle through a luminous voile of Tagette. A vivacious, citrusy, fruity/floral pathway to a new transition that includes the wondrous notes of a rare flower majestically called "Queen of the Night," found in Jamaica and Cuba that blooms only at night with a powerful vanilla-touched aroma, and fades before dawn. This next transition blends radiant Heliotrope with exotic Caribbean Raintree Flower, from the West Indies, also known as "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow." This beautiful flower opens to a cool, deep periwinkle blue, then mellows to a pale, icy shade before fading to off-white just before its petals fall. Weaving through this transition is the cool sophistication of Daphne Flower and a vibrant melange of tropical zest from luscious Mango and juicy Pineapple. The third and final transition of Havana pour elle interweaves the alluring, stimulating warmth of the Purple White Vanila Orchid—a bloom endowed by mother nature with all her warmth and beauty. The Vanilla Orchid blossoms arch delicately on sprays up to 3 feet long. Finally, rich amber and precious sandalwood combine with the Vanilla Orchid and touches of vanilla bean for a deep, lingering, almost addictive quality.



Havana pour elle is memorable, diffusive, ultimately feminine. A fragrance that has it all in one alluring package that catchest he eye and the heart, right from the start.

Havana pour elle. The defining fragrance for a new kind of glamour and a soul mate for Havana, the fragrance sensation for men created by Aramis■

OVERHEARD AT TURINO..

TURINO-TURINO
& Cheers at Turino
"Building a Brand Name"

Spring is the right season for TURINO
A claim that is not difficult to prove. The winds of change are touching the hearts of the people here!

The TURINO culture is leaving its mark on the "TURINO-ISTS"

- **TURINO Restaurant has taken a special turn - a turn to the young hearts.**
 TURINO is not particularly addressing the crowd that needs to dine with the crowd! It has added a new flavour of entertainment for diners who love to succumb to the ecstasy of the fine gourmet good, while listening to the tunes of the TURINO music specially programmed for future occasions.
- **The Simple Formula to the TURINO brand name**
 Excellent ingredients + professional cuisine + courteous service
- **The new menu features 3 basic offers in addition to TURINO'S traditional menu.**
 Choose from The Pasta Carnival, The Skewer Line or the Seafood and Shrimp Menu.
- **Cheers Elite Cafe and Cheers Upstairs are now significant entertainment spots for the young, the trendy and the gourmet**

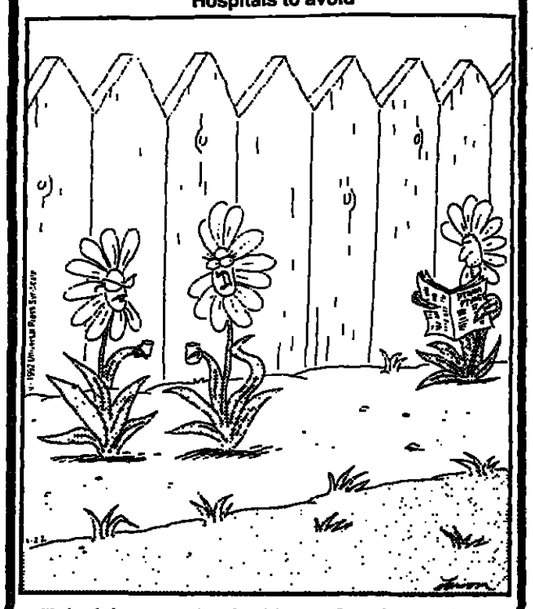
SPRING IS A TURINO SEASON.

THE FAR SIDE

By GARY LARSON



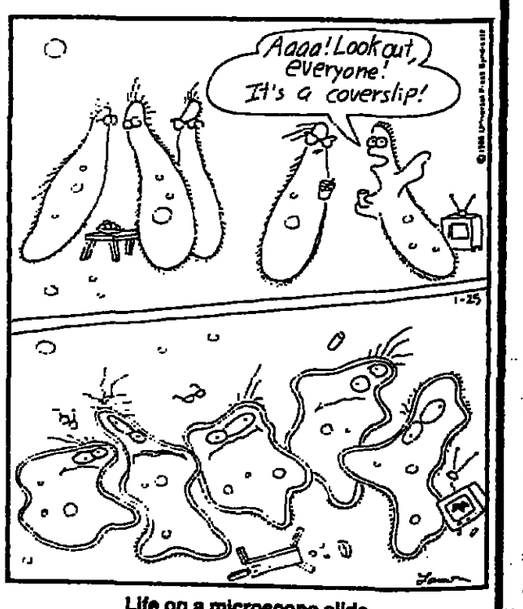
Hospitals to avoid



"I don't have any hard evidence, Connie — but my intuition tells me that Ed's been cross-pollinating."



"OK, let's start the exam. Stinking caps on, everyone — stinking caps on."



Life on a microscope slide

AGENDA

Exhibitions

■ An exhibition entitled *Painter of Emotion* by Jean-Luc at **The French Cultural Center**, until 30 April.

■ Photograph exhibition by Yousef Al'Allan at **Balqa Art Gallery** until 1 May.

■ An exhibition entitled *Homage to Yafa* by Palestinian artist Nasser Soumi at **Darat al Funun**, continuing until 9 May.

■ An exhibition entitled *The Right to Hope, 'One World Art'* at the **Jordan National Gallery of Fine Art**, continuing until 1 May

Films

■ "Picasso. P..II", at **Darat al Funun**, Thursday 25 April at 5:30 pm.

■ La fille de d'artagnan, at **The French Cultural Center**, Monday 29 April at 8 pm

■ All the Presidents' Men, at **the American Center**, Thursday 18 April at 5:00 pm

APRIL 1996

A special section offering fresh perspectives on global issues prepared for

The Star

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The numbers begin to add up for microcredit

Poor entrepreneurs find doors opening

By Michael Chu

CAUGHT AT THE crossroads of high birth rates and urban migration, people looking for work throughout the developing world far outstrip the capacity of their economies to provide jobs. Millions of low-income men and women survive by establishing businesses of their own.

Like their Fortune 500 counterparts, these "microentrepreneurs"—street vendors, seamstresses, bakers, carpenters, shoemakers—require working capital and asset financing to run their businesses. Yet many are located in areas shunned by established financial institutions, and until recently their sole source of financing was the local moneylender, whose cash is readily available but at rates of up to 20 percent a day. In response, microfinance—the provision of financial services to microenterprises at commercial rates reflecting costs and not usury—has evolved during the last two decades from the visionary dream of a few adventurous non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to an emerging, but real, part of many countries' financial system.

REPORTING FROM LA PAZ

The experience of ACCION International, a Boston-area non-profit organization working in Latin America, shows this evolution. ACCION shifted from community action programs to an exclusive focus on microfinance when it realized that the progress of the huge microenterprise sector was held back by harsh economic conditions, rather than any factors inherent to poverty. Realizing that not even a corporate giant could grow if it accessed credit on the same terms as microentrepreneurs, ACCION developed a distinct approach to microcredit—it viewed its target audience as clients needing access to credit, not beneficiaries requiring assistance.

Once microentrepreneurs are viewed as legitimate businesses rather than charitable cases, microlenders must treat them as customers regardless of how unconventional their needs may seem. In order to ensure that services to microenterprises endure, the organizations in the field must be managed as serious economic entities, where income from operations must eventually cover all costs. To translate all this into an effective contribution to economic development and social change, the number of clients must be significant. Accordingly, economic self-sufficiency and scale became the guiding principles of ACCION's approach to microfinance.

Following these guidelines, and through an accumulation of scars, ACCION built up a network encompassing 14 Latin American countries, six cities in the United States and 24 local microfinance organizations. In 1995, this network disbursed US$335 million in loans averaging $600 apiece to 280,000 clients. Equally significant, the overall late payment rate was 4 percent and the repayment rate was over 98 percent. Experience has shown that the credit profile of microenterprise loans, when properly deployed, can be superior to credit card receipts that are securitized in the US.

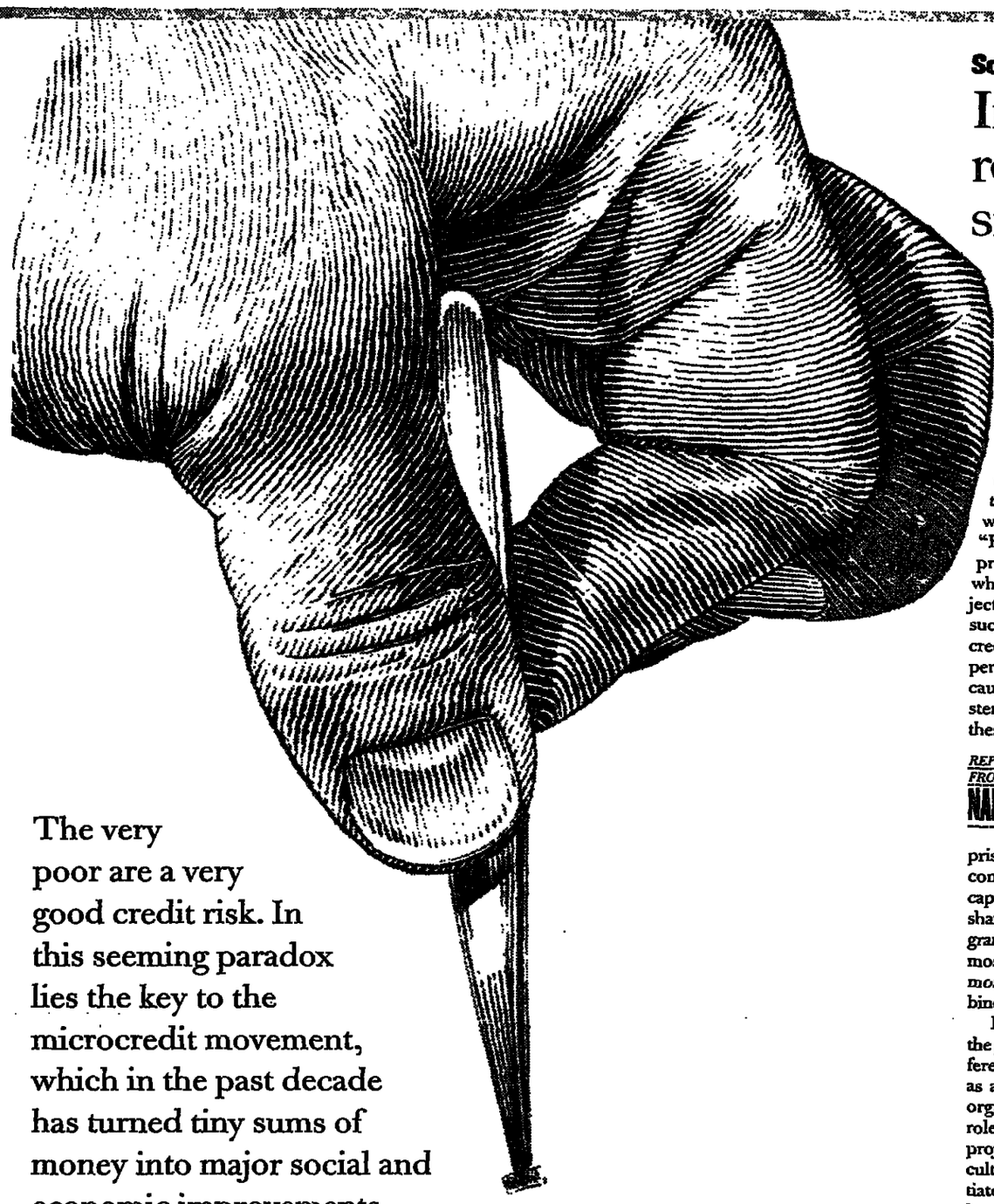
Outstanding asset quality was followed by economic viability—the ability of the programs in the field to manage revenues and costs so as to achieve operating surpluses. In turn, economic viability allows the programs to link, on a commercial basis, with the local banking systems. This revolutionary fusion of an activity with high social impact with the resources of the capital market have spurred a dramatic growth of microfinance. Since 1989, the network grew at a compounded rate of almost 60 percent a year.

That this rate of growth is but a harbinger of what is in store for microfinance is illustrated by the fact that several programs are already overwhelming the capacity of national banking systems to serve them as corporate clients. In February 1992, ACCION helped to create Banco Solidario S.A. (or BancoSol, as it is known around the world), the first commercial bank dedicated exclusively to microenterprise. BancoSol's first loan to a client averages $125 and never exceeds, by policy, $500.

In 1994, the last year for which the Bolivian Superintendency of Banks has released full-year statistics, BancoSol led the entire banking system with a 2.2 percent return on assets. Coverage has also been outstanding: the entire banking system of Bolivia reaches 167,000 clients—63,000 of whom belong to BancoSol, an institution that did not exist four years ago.

Results like these, allied to the rapidly expanding connection between microfinance and the world's capital markets, at last make it possible to contemplate wielding the true financial firepower needed to unlock the potential of the millions of people who desperately need it. Microfinance has become the emerging opportunity of the emerging markets. ●

MICHAEL CHU IS PRESIDENT OF ACCION INTERNATIONAL.



The very poor are a very good credit risk. In this seeming paradox lies the key to the microcredit movement, which in the past decade has turned tiny sums of money into major social and economic improvements. Now that it is established, the movement faces two major questions: should the definition of 'micro' be expanded to allow lending for bigger projects, and should it step in to fund needed social services?

'Micro' gets bigger

Grameen's backyard getting crowded

By Shahid Doha

THE SUCCESSES OF Bangladesh's Grameen Bank, which has been extending small amounts of credit to the very poor for over 20 years, have been well documented and publicized. They have also been imitated on a scale unimaginable to the early pioneers of the microcredit movement.

Among Grameen's many admirers are US President Bill Clinton and his wife, Hillary, who are personal friends of the bank's founder and chairman, Mohammed Yunus, and have used his experience and advice to initiate a Grameen-type program supporting small businesses in southern Arkansas, an area hard hit by declining jobs in agriculture and industry. Indeed, Grameen clones have been set up or are being set up in not only several countries across Asia and Africa, but also in rich, industrialized nations such as Norway, Canada, France and the US to help disadvantaged, inner-city groups.

Grameen's core principle at the time of its inception was the belief that, since broad, national policies had failed to significantly alleviate poverty in rural areas, perhaps a grassroots approach might solve the problem. It set about designing systems for providing collateral-free loans to the very poor, something that traditional banks shied away from. An essential element of these systems was lending to groups of people, rather than individuals, so that peer-pressure would ensure repayment.

REPORTING FROM DHAKA

With this in mind, in the late 1970s Mohammed Yunus's Grameen Bank began to forward small amounts of money, the equivalent of around US$250, to small groups of people, mainly women, in order to establish small businesses such as rice husking, weaving, trading, rearing livestock and buying rickshaws. The results have been spectacular in terms of improving the livelihoods, general living conditions and awareness of the beneficiaries. To date Grameen has lent around $1.5 billion to some 2 million people countrywide. The repayment rate stands at over 97 percent.

In Bangladesh, while Grameen Bank has been—and continues to be—the major player by far in the area of microcredit lending to the rural poor, there are other institutions who have been formulating their own approaches to microcredit. Presently, some $540 million is lent annually to the very poor for income-generating projects, and Grameen accounts for around 68 percent of this figure. The balance is taken up by the Bangladesh Rural and Agricultural Cooperative, or BRAC (15 percent), Asha (5 percent) and Proshika (2 percent), with the remaining 5 percent divided among several smaller organizations.

Of these, BRAC is perhaps the best known, both in Bangladesh and overseas. Its work, unlike Grameen, encompasses a wider spectrum of activities than simply extending loans to the poor. Set up in 1972 as a relief agency, BRAC is today a 12,000-strong organization implementing programs aimed at poverty alleviation and empowerment of the poor. Through its Rural Development Program, BRAC—which aims to establish a separate bank in the near future—has to date extended small loans totaling some $200 million, with annual disbursements last year of approximately $78 million.

The actors in the movement see a need to slowly shift the emphasis from lending for small, very basic projects to financing slightly larger businesses such as small to medium-sized factories

Institutions such as Asha, Proshika and PKSF, though relatively new on the scene, have quickly established themselves, not only in terms of their volume of loans, but also in their lending philosophies, their credit packages and their ability to recover operating costs. For example, Proshika aims not only to enhance its credit functions but pays equal importance to social development, things such as education and health, while PKSF and BRAC lay greater stress on the aspect of training.

There is also the matter of credit discipline, encouraging and ensuring weekly or monthly repayments. Here, although all the players lend on a group rather than individual basis, Asha has developed a module system where there are operating units of 1,200 members, each run by four credit officers. This has proved to be highly cost-effective—Asha recovers 100 percent of its operating costs.

At a time when aid money and grants are becoming increasingly hard to come by, the players in the microcredit sector are moving rapidly towards becoming self-financing organizations. Funding for these programs has historically originated from richer countries and multilateral institutions, but Grameen in recent years has transformed itself into a self-financing institution. For example, Grameen has recently secured a $30 million credit line from Japan's OECF on commercial terms, while Asha borrows funds from both local banks and the government. Other microcredit organizations, while still dependent on overseas grants and soft loans, intend to generate their own funds through a combination of profits, savings and commercial loans.

So what is the future for this very important engine of economic and development activity at the grassroots level?

There is no doubt that this form of lending has enabled the very poor to increase their earnings and given them a sense of purpose and feeling of involvement in society as a whole. It has had a positive impact on family

▶ GRAMEEN'S BACKYARD PAGE 2

Social services next?

In Kenya, big returns on small loans

By Bethuel A. Kiplagat

THE FIRST 30 YEARS of the microcredit movement in Kenya were marked by trial and error. The next 30 years may be characterized by a growing role as an innovator and provider of social services.

Microcredit first came to Kenya in the early 1960s, when Quaker-run development organizations tried to establish a program in the western part of the country. Named "Partnership for Productivity," the program provided credit to groups which then invested in communal projects. This group approach was not successful and was replaced by direct credit to entrepreneurs. Again, the experiment did not succeed, this time because of a high default rate that stemmed from the lack of security for these loans.

REPORTING FROM NAIROBI

Despite this inauspicious beginning, Kenya today boasts 24 institutions that actively give credit to microenterprises. Most of these organizations are concentrated in urban areas, with the capital city of Nairobi home to the lion's share. The Kenya Rural Enterprise Programme, known as K-REP, is by far the most active of these. Its turnover is almost twice that of all the others combined.

Like the Quakers, K-REP found that the practice of microcredit was a lot different from the theory. K-REP started as a development non-governmental organization (NGO) whose primary role was lending funds for communal projects in the rural areas. Water, agriculture and livestock projects were initiated with loan capital from this fund, but the project never really took off due to mismanagement.

The program was abandoned and replaced with one that loaned money to development agencies, who in turn would loan it to individual entrepreneurs. Again the program stumbled along, proving over the long-run to be an economic failure.

After these failures, or rather "learning experiences," K-REP took a bold step and launched a credit program called "Juhudi"—a Swahili word which means "effort." The basic con-

▶ BIG RETURNS PAGE 2

MICROCREDIT'S MACROGROWTH

BIG RETURNS

Continued from page 1

cept was to give credit to an individual entrepreneur through a group. These groups normally consisted of 30 members who would subdivide themselves into smaller groups consisting of five members. K-REP focused on the group of five. Loans are requested by the subgroups, generally as a "package" of requests, but given to the individual through the larger group which acts as guarantor. This larger group is well structured and meets regularly to discuss business. After a slow start, the results were very encouraging.

Through research, K-REP also arrived at a system where a homogenous social group contributed—usually on a monthly basis—to a fund which is then loaned to one of the members. The process is repeated until everyone has received a loan from this rotating credit scheme, known in one of the local languages as "Chikola." K-REP adopted, modified and fine-tuned the system. This is one of the most successful programs, particularly in terms of cost-per-shilling lent.

K-REP has been lending to small enterprises since the end of 1991. The total portfolio lent until the end of 1995 comes to 813,700,000 Kenyan shillings (approximately US$16 million). The repayment rate for this portfolio is 97.2 percent.

With such an impressive performance, K-REP has proven that one can bank on the poor and very small enterprises. The high rate of return and the scope for growth has attracted a lot of interest from other financial institutions. The microcredit organizations are barely scratching the surface of the movement's enormous potential. Sectors such as agriculture, livestock development, housing, health and education have not been touched in most of the countries of Africa. K-REP has begun to venture into these sectors, conducting feasibility studies which look very promising. In the future it is likely K-REP will offer a whole range of financial services to the microcredit sector.

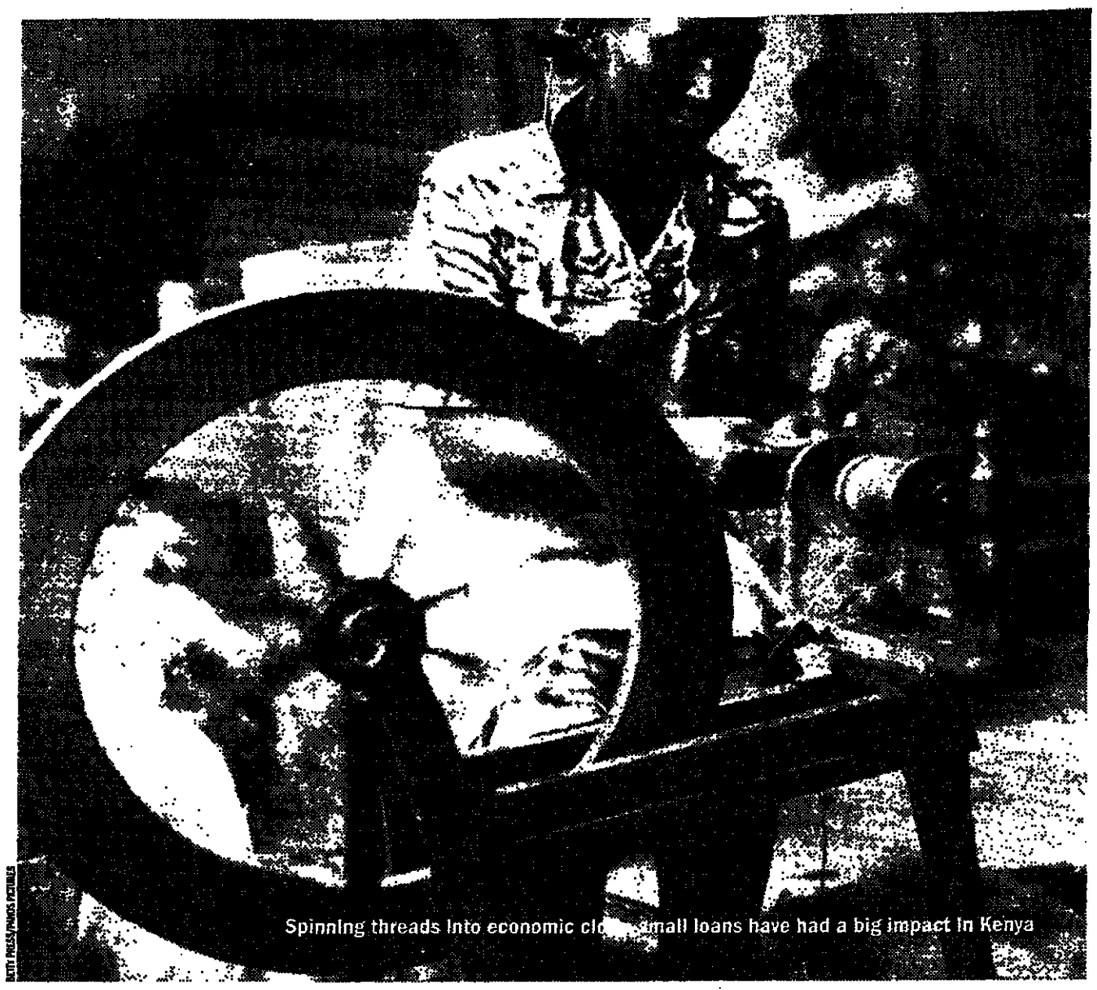
Small enterprises have had significant impact on Kenya, increasing productivity and contributing to economic growth. Now, because of the decline in government services, K-REP and other microcredit groups may become involved in projects that have a direct social benefit.

Recently, K-REP gave a loan of $12,000 to a nurse who had opened a maternity clinic in one of the slum areas of Nairobi, thereby enabling her to more than quadruple the number of patients she was handling. There is enormous potential in this sector, as the government-run hospitals and clinics are suffering from a lack of money and maintenance. A working group has been established to look into the possibility of creating a health insurance scheme for the poor.

All these activities and programs can develop rapidly if the right financial policies are in place. Unfortunately, in much of Africa this is not the case. The present banking policies in many developing countries are discriminatory, as is the banking culture which excludes the poor. But microcredit is slowly finding its rightful place in the financial marketplace.

Looking down the road, it is not inconceivable that in the not too distant future, there will be an international World Microcredit Bank alongside the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. ●

BETHUEL A. KIPLAGAT IS DIRECTOR OF THE NAIROBI-BASED KENYA RURAL ENTERPRISE PROGRAMME.



BETH PRESS/PANOS PICTURES

Spinning threads into economic cl... small loans have had a big impact in Kenya

GRAMEEN'S BACKYARD

Continued from page 1

planning, schooling, food intake and the propensity to save. It has empowered society, and because over 90 percent of the beneficiaries are women, it has helped to break down barriers that prevent rural women from participating fully in Bangladesh's economy.

A sign of the increasing importance that the microcredit sector will play in the future is the attention that both the Bangladesh government and the World Bank are giving it. The World Bank is presently designing a microcredit poverty alleviation project that will allocate $110 million over a four-year period with the money to be allocated to PKSF through government channels. PKSF in turn will channel the funds to the ultimate beneficiaries through over 100 non-governmental organization (NGOs).

While the last 15 to 20 years has established microcredit lending as a viable tool in the battle against absolute poverty, the actors in the movement see a need to slowly shift the emphasis from lending for small, very basic projects to financing slightly larger businesses—small to medium-size factories or local construction firms, for instance. This debate will likely energize an already dynamic movement. ●

SHAHID DOHA IS THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF TAISHAN LIMITED, A CONSULTANCY AND TRADING FIRM BASED IN DHAKA, BANGLADESH.

Philippines reaps political benefits of microcredit

Bank empowers ex-communists

By Isa Q. Tan

REPORTING FROM MANILA

EMPOWERING THE people. That has been the government's battle cry since the Filipinos ousted Ferdinand Marcos from power in dramatic fashion 10 years ago.

As part of its "people empowerment" program, the government has been encouraging the establishment of cooperatives. It has instituted several agencies and programs aimed at creating an environment conducive to the growth of such cooperatives. Microcredit has played a big role in this process, and not only in an economic sense. In addition to fostering entrepreneurs, it has also helped communist rebels reintegrate into the society they rejected and fought against.

One of the more popular funding institutions is the Land Bank of the Philippines (LANDBANK). The bank has numerous lending and financing programs specifically for the rural sector. In fact, 60 percent of the bank's lending activities is accounted for by its developmental and countryside loans to small farmers and fisherfolk in the agricultural sector, making it a key player in rural development.

Among the many programs of the bank is the Countryside Partnership Scheme, capitalized by over 100 sponsors from the private sector who committed more than 400 million pesos (US$14.8 million). Over 400 farmers' and fishermen' cooperatives availed themselves of this fund to boost their livelihood.

One of them is the Countryside Multi-Purpose Cooperative. Based in the village of Angat, Bulacan, the coop was initially composed of former communist rebels.

When Corazon Aquino took over the country's leadership, one of her first moves was to free all political detainees. This was one of several moves by her government towards the dissidents. Aquino also set up the National Reconciliation Development Program (NRDP), aimed at persuading rebels to return to society's mainstream through incentives like amnesty and financial assistance.

Many former rebels, feeling the genuineness of the government's gesture, opted to return to civilian life.

Zenaida Maliwat, also known as Ka Laura, and 14 of her comrades are just among the thousands who came down from the mountains to take advantage of the NRDP's offer. Together with two civilians, they formed Countryside in November 1990. Armed with 100,000 pesos from the NRDP, they set out to help the very same people they professed to serve when they first took to the mountains: the poor. In abandoning their assault-rifles, Ka Laura felt that the time had come to bring about changes in society without resorting to armed struggle.

Realizing that, in addition to much-needed credit and financing, farmers needed a source of affordable fertilizer and pesticides, they first ventured in fertilizer and pesticide trading and lending to members. The loans allowed their members to try other ways of earning a living aside from tilling the soil. Many of them went into poultry and livestock production. One thing was clear to Countryside officials: not only members should be extended help, but non-members as well.

From an initial membership of 17, the group's number tripled within the first two months of operation. As a result, there was not enough capital to meet the demands and needs of coop members. Countryside's officials then realized that they needed to turn once more to the government for support.

Success did not come easily, however. Some said that the money would simply be used to finance the New People's Army (NPA), the underground military arm of the Communist Party

The government did not disappoint. This time, the LANDBANK readily lent them 420,000 pesos. The money was used to finance a tractor, which was rented out not only to coop members, but to non-members as well.

Success did not come easily, however. From the beginning, there were the skeptics who were very vocal about their distrust of rebel returnees, believing that the reconciliation program would come to nothing more than just handing out money to undeserving and ungrateful former rebels. Some even said that the money would simply be used to finance the New People's Army (NPA), the underground military arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines.

"That was the worst problem we encountered. Some people did not believe in us," recalls Ka Laura. We could've taken the money back to the mountains. We could've bought weapons. But we didn't."

While some groups chose to make prophets of the skeptics, Countryside set out to prove their sincerity. Any loans they were granted were repaid at the proper time. Rather than give in to their critics, they made sure that whatever was given to them, they gave back with more. Their efforts proved worthwhile.

These days, the coop's membership has burgeoned, and it continues to grow. Members are no longer simply rebel returnees, but civilians as well. Their ventures are no longer limited to just trading and lending to members, but have grown to include a rice mill/warehouse with a 60,000-bag storage capacity. Another project is a bag factory that produces semi-finished bags. These are sub-contracted and the finished bags exported to countries like the US and Germany.

Countryside's projects benefit not only their members, but increasingly target the needs of the community at large. Among the projects in their pipeline is the improvement of water facilities for their whole village.

In retrospect, Ka Laura admits that they had made the right choice in opting to work with government. She and her colleagues have realized that, through peaceful cooperation, they have more to offer the very people they vowed to serve. ●

ISA Q. TAN IS A STAFF WRITER FOR *MARID Agribusiness* MAGAZINE IN MANILA.

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2ND PRIZE 5 OUT OF 6 PLUS BONUS	24	$123,022.70
3RD PRIZE 5 OUT OF 6	1,050	$2,249.50
4TH PRIZE 4 OUT OF 6	61,084	$74.10
5TH PRIZE 3 OUT OF 6	1,154,926	$10.00
TOTAL PRIZES 1,217,085		TOTAL PRIZE VALUE $40,390,104.20

* All prizes quoted in Canadian dollars. 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th prizes are calculated on a percentage of the total prize pool.

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6 Boards	☐ $270.	☐ $675.	☐ $1350.

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1	2	3	4	5	6
10 20 30 40	10 20 30 40	10 20 30 40	10 20 30 40	10 20 30 40	10 20 30 40
1 11 21 31 41	1 11 21 31 41	1 11 21 31 41	1 11 21 31 41	1 11 21 31 41	1 11 21 31 41
2 12 22 32 42	2 12 22 32 42	2 12 22 32 42	2 12 22 32 42	2 12 22 32 42	2 12 22 32 42
3 13 23 33 43	3 13 23 33 43	3 13 23 33 43	3 13 23 33 43	3 13 23 33 43	3 13 23 33 43
4 14 24 34 44	4 14 24 34 44	4 14 24 34 44	4 14 24 34 44	4 14 24 34 44	4 14 24 34 44
5 15 25 35 45	5 15 25 35 45	5 15 25 35 45	5 15 25 35 45	5 15 25 35 45	5 15 25 35 45
6 16 26 36 46	6 16 26 36 46	6 16 26 36 46	6 16 26 36 46	6 16 26 36 46	6 16 26 36 46
7 17 27 37 47	7 17 27 37 47	7 17 27 37 47	7 17 27 37 47	7 17 27 37 47	7 17 27 37 47
8 18 28 38 48	8 18 28 38 48	8 18 28 38 48	8 18 28 38 48	8 18 28 38 48	8 18 28 38 48
9 19 29 39 49	9 19 29 39 49	9 19 29 39 49	9 19 29 39 49	9 19 29 39 49	9 19 29 39 49

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The Star's GUIDE TV

Programs on JTV from 27 April- 3 May



To advertise in this space, call us at 652380

ENGLISH PROGRAMS

SATURDAY
10:05—Lucky Luke
11:20—The Crystal Maze
12:10—Three's Company
12:35—Feature Film: *High Plains Drifter*, starring: Clint Eastwood and Verna Bloom
2:15—Clips of the Unexpected
2:40—Growing Pains
3:05—South by South East
3:30—Feature Film: *drop Dead Fred*, starring: Rik Mayall and Marsha Mason
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Tequila & Bonetti
8:30—Charlemagne
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
10:50—Feature Film: *I don't Buy Kisses Anymore*, starring: Jason Alexander and Nia Peeples
12:20—Celine Dion (Concert)

SUNDAY
10:05—Asterix
11:20—The Crystal Maze
12:10—Sorry
12:35—Feature Film: *The War Wagon*, starring: John Wayne and Kirk Douglas
2:15—Clips of the Unexpected
2:40—Growing Pains
3:05—South by South East
3:30—Feature Film: *The Aurora Encounter*, starring: Jack Elam and Peter Brown
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Tequila & Bonetti
8:30—Charlemagne
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
10:50—Feature Film: *Zelda*, starring: Natasha Richardson and Timothy Hutton
12:20—The Planets (Concert)

MONDAY
10:05—Heathcliff
11:20—The Crystal Maze
12:10—Three's Company
12:35—Feature Film: *Steel Cowboy*, starring: James Brolin and Rip Tom
2:15—Clips of the Unexpected
2:40—Growing Pains
3:05—South by South East
3:30—Feature Film: *Jimmy the Kid*, starring: Paul Le Mat and Gary Coleman
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Tequila & Bonetti
8:30—Charlemagne
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
10:50—Feature Film: *Avenging Angel*, starring: Tom Berenger and James Coburn
12:20—Bruce Springsteen

TUESDAY
10:05—The Fool of the World and the Flying Ship
10:55—Leo the Lion
11:20—The Crystal Maze
12:10—Sorry
12:35—Feature Film: *Billy the Kid*, starring: Val Kilmer and Julie Carmen
2:15—Clips of the Unexpected
2:40—Growing Pains
3:05—South by South East
3:30—Feature Film: *Brain Donors*, starring: John Turturro and Mel Smith
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Tequila & Bonetti
8:30—Passion and Paradise
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
10:50—Feature Film: *Victim of Beauty*, starring: Jennifer Rubin and Peter Outbridge
12:20—Placido Domingo

WEDNESDAY
10:05—Lucky Luke
11:20—The Crystal Maze
12:10—Three's Company
12:35—Feature Film: *Where the Spirit Lives*, starring: Michell St John and Anne Maric McDonald
2:15—Clips of the Unexpected
2:40—Growing Pains
3:05—South by South East
3:30—Feature Film: *Jail House Rock*, starring: Elvis Presley and Judy Tyler
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Tequila & Bonetti
8:30—Passion and Paradise
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
10:50—Feature Film: *Obsessed with a Married Woman*, starring: Jane Seymour and Tim Matheson
12:20—Placido Domingo


Flight of the Black Angel, on Friday at 3:30pm

THURSDAY
10:05—Asterix
11:20—The Crystal Maze
12:10—Sorry
12:35—Feature Film: *Kansas Pacific*, starring: Sterling Hayden and Barton MacLane
2:15—Clips of the Unexpected
2:40—Growing Pains
3:05—South by South East
3:30—Feature Film: *Wise Guys*, starring: Danny Devito and Joe Piscopo
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Tequila & Bonetti
8:30—Stradivari
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
10:50—Feature Film: *Apprentice to Murder*

FRIDAY
10:05—Care Bears in Wonderland
11:20—The Crystal Maze
12:10—Three's Company
12:35—Feature Film: *The Law and Jake Wade*, starring: Robert Taylor and Patricia Owens
2:15—Clips of the Unexpected
2:40—Growing Pains
3:05—America's Funniest People
3:30—Feature Film: *Flight of the Black Angel*, starring: Peter Strauss and William O'leary
5:00—French Programs
7:30—News Headlines
7:35—Tequila & Bonetti
8:30—Passion and Paradise
10:00—News at Ten
10:25—The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air
10:50—Feature Film: *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, starring: JJane Powell and Howard Keel

PROGRAMMES EN FRANÇAIS

SAMEDI
5:00—Dessins animés
Ordy
5:15—Musique
«Rocks legends»
6:00—Série
Château Vallon
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Faut pas rêver
«Burkina Fasso»

DIMANCHE
5:00—Dessins animés
Ordy
5:15—Spectacle
«Planète clowns»
5:30—Divertissement
Surprise surprise
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine
Sports et musique

LUNDI
5:00—Dessins animés
Ordy
5:15—Divertissement
L'école des fans
«Julio Iglesias»
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine
Cinq sur cinq

MARDI
5:00—Dessins animés
Ordy
5:15—Spectacle
«Planète clowns»
5:30—Musique
«Julien Clerc à l'Olympia»
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine
Ushuaïa
«La flotte engloutie»

MERCREDI
5:00—Dessins animés
Le chat perché
5:30—Film
«Un père passe» avec Eddy Mitchell, Guy Marchand,...
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine
Sports et musique

JEUDI
5:00—Dessin animé
Le chat perché
5:30—Variétés
Le monde est à vous
«Mireille Mathieu»
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine
Archimède

VENDREDI
5:00—Dessins animés
Le chat perché
5:30—Film
«La menace», d'Alain Corneau. Avec Yves Montand, Carole Laure,...
7:00—Le journal
7:15—Magazine
Allo la Terre
«Le vent»

Programs are subject to change by JTV



Cinema

"DEVIL IN A BLUE DRESS" (Columbia/TriStar, $100.71): In this adaptation of the novel by noted author Walter Mosley, Denzel Washington plays a 1940s war veteran who becomes an amateur private eye, a job that gets him drawn into a case involving political corruption. Carl Franklin (*"One False Move"*) directed the film, which features a stellar supporting performance by Don Cheadle of TV's *"Picket Fences."* ** (R: AS, P, V)

"BACKLASH: OBLIVION II" (Full Moon, $89.97): In this sequel to the 1994 film that merged the western and science-fiction genres, Jackie Swanson — best-known as bartender Woody's love Kelly on TV's *"Cheers"* — reprises her role as a leather-clad, whip-skilled heroine who tries to keep evil forces from overrunning her town. *"Star Trek"* veteran George Takei, Julie Newmar and Isaac Hayes also star. ** (Not rated: AS, P, V)

HELD OVER: *"BABE"* (MCA/Universal, $22.98): The movie that has proven beyond all doubt that talking pigs have a chance to make it big in show business, this charming, Australian-made sleeper hit is an recent Oscar nominee for Best Picture. The title character's worth is proven by the ability to gather flocks of sheep together; human co-star James Cromwell is in the running for Best Supporting Actor honors. *** (G)

"MURIEL'S WEDDING" (Miramax, $100.72): Writer-director P.J. Hogan's widely acclaimed Australian comedy stars Toni Collette as a young woman who leaves her small town — with her best friend (Rachel Griffiths) in tow — and samples metropolitan life. That quickly affords her more than she expected, since she soon becomes engaged; however, her path to the altar is filled with numerous surprises. *** (R: AS, P)

"THE BABY-SITTERS CLUB" (Columbia/TriStar, $19.95): Ann M. Martin's popular series of books for youngsters gets live-action treatment in director Melanie Mayron's (*"thirtysomething"*) comedy, which does incorporate certain elements of drama ... particularly in its treatment of one girl's reaction to her parents' divorce. The stars include Schuyler Fisk (Sissy Spacek's daughter), Bre Blair and Rachael Leigh Cook. ** (PG: P)

COMING SOON: *"MAGIC IN THE WATER"* (Columbia/TriStar, April 9): Mark Harmon plays a single father whose children discover a mysterious creature while on vacation. (PG)

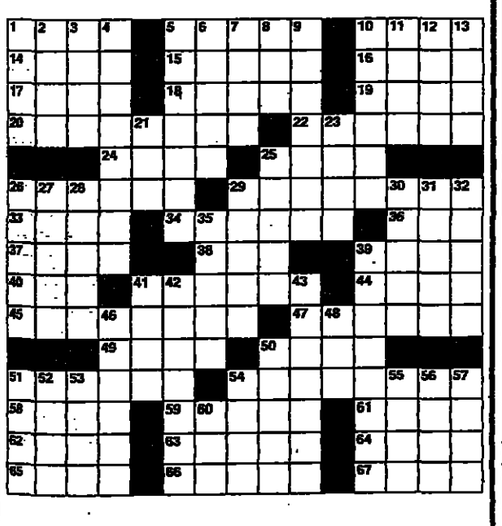
"TO DIE FOR" (Columbia/TriStar, April 9): Nicole Kidman plays a TV weathercaster who manipulates several teen-agers into helping her get rid of her husband. (R)

"VAMPIRE IN BROOKLYN" (Paramount, April 9): Eddie Murphy has the title role in this semi-spoof, directed by *"A Nightmare on Elm Street's"* Wes Craven. (R)

FAMILY-VIEWING GUIDE KEY: *AS, adult situations; N, nudity; P, profanity; V, violence; GV, particularly graphic violence.*

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CROSSWORD PUZZLE

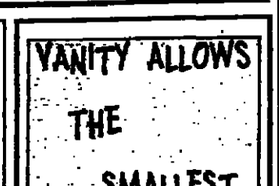


ACROSS
1 Cauterize
5 Public house
10 Federal agents
14 Or —!
15 Hippodrome
16 Very recent
17 Letters
18 Ascended
19 Ins and —
20 Fiery places
22 Pitt
24 Solar disk god
25 Lugosi
26 Certain tires
29 Fighter or bomber
33 Sea gull
34 Rejects
36 Family member
37 Appends
38 Tiny colonist
39 Silent
40 To and —
41 Facts
44 Measure of farmland
45 Stronghold
47 Kind of spaniel
49 Icy deposit
50 Grade
51 Allotment
54 Kind of stove
58 Severeid
59 Circa
61 Feels sorrow for
62 Gossip
63 Snare
64 Fish-eating bird
65 Extensions
66 Mary — Moore
67 Tragic king of drama

DOWN
1 Partly: pref.
2 Dash
3 Seemingly
4 Memorizes again
5 Get control of
6 Sky hunter
7 "— of the d'Urbervilles"
8 Comp. pt.
9 Case for a light
10 Worldwide
11 Manhandle
12 Suffix for kitchen
13 Cozy dwelling
21 Highway: abbr.
23 Mont Blanc's range
25 Origin
26 Employees
27 Hombre's name
28 Warmth
29 Relatives
30 In a frenzied state
31 — Dame
32 African ruler
35 Stop
39 Food fish
41 Group of singers
42 Leftover piece
43 Disperse
46 Magician's specialty
48 Sphere
50 Timid one
51 Plexus
52 Salt lake in Russia
53 Cultivate
54 Billiards game
55 Inveigle
56 A Home
57 French river
60 Youth



SOLUTION:





—THIS WEEK'S— HOROSCOPE

By Linda Black

Weekly Tip: This week is better for playing than for working. Watch out for accidents.

Aries (March 21-April 19). Do all the work you want to accomplish now. You may start losing interest in it soon. An attractive diversion could hold your attention, if you're lucky.

Taurus (April 20-May 20). You're under pressure. Spend lots of time with your sweetheart, making plans for the future.

Gemini (May 21-June 21). Stay home as much as possible. Clean your room while you're at it. If you're not already in love, you will be soon.

Cancer (June 22-July 22). Study; you'll learn most easily. A friend's bizarre request could have you temporarily stymied. Do things you don't like and don't whine about it.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22). Don't spend all your money on supplies; you may want to go someplace later. Get an attractive tutor to help you with your lessons.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're very good with numbers. Help out a friend who can't add two and two without getting nervous.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Finish overdue work. Later you'll be antsy to go out. You may have a very attractive offer, too. You'll be pushed to try new things.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Friends help you achieve your goals. Work will dominate your life for a while. It'll be good experience. Race around and get all your personal chores done.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Toe the line. An older person is very demanding but probably right. You're entering a fun phase.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). It may be time to switch careers again. Pick one that will assist you in adopting the style to which you'd like to become accustomed.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Financial matters have you grumpy. Go ahead and do the math; you'll feel better afterward. Education and travel are easier.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20). Follow a neat freak's lead and you'll save yourself a lot of trouble. The temptation to spend could be intense. Figure out how to make more money first.

If You're Having a Birthday This Week: Learn to do the job perfectly this year, and everything will be easier from now on.

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Bridge

Who's At Fault?
By Tannah Hirsch

North-South vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ K J
♡ 5 3
◇ A K J 2
♣ 9 8 7 6 4

WEST
♠ 9 7 6 3
♡ Void
◇ 10 5 4
♣ A K Q J 10 2

EAST
♠ A 10 8 5 4 2
♡ J 10 4 2
◇ Q 9 3
♣ Void

SOUTH
♠ Q
♡ A K Q 9 8 7 6
◇ 8 7 6
♣ 5 3

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
3♡	4♠	4♡	Dbl
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Opening lead: King of ♣

Follow the bidding and play of this hand. Then decide who erred, and whether the crimes were major or minor.

East-West can make four spades, but no one can be blamed for not getting there. We would be petrified of making a takeout double with the West hand, and East can hardly bid spades when, if partner has no fit, there could be a correction to five clubs and the penalty doubles would start. High-level preempts have a way of making life difficult for the opponents! However, we do give East a charge for doubling four hearts.

West cashed the ace and king of clubs, on which East discarded two diamonds. West shifted to a spade, East took the ace and returned the suit, declarer pitching a diamond. A low heart was led from dummy and, when East produced the deuce, declarer finessed the six. When that held, declarer drew trumps and claimed the rest of the tricks. Note that it would not have helped East to split the trump honors. Declarer would win, cross to dummy with a diamond and take the marked finesse for the remaining trump honor.

West slipped at trick three. After winning the first two tricks, West should have continued with a third club, allowing East to sluff the remaining diamond. That would deprive declarer of a diamond entry to dummy. A diamond shift would also have worked. East, too, could have defeated four hearts by returning the queen of diamonds after winning the ace of spades. In both the latter cases, East need only split the heart honors to ensure a one-trick defeat.

Who gets the major blame? West, by a vote of 2-to-1!

"Are we in Amman!?



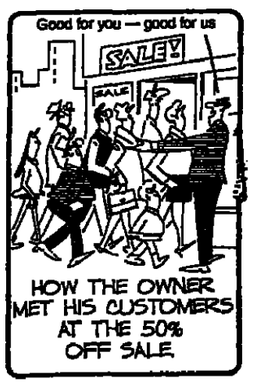
"ARE WE in Amman?...", This was the first of many positive response overheard at Champions last Monday night.. Yes! We are in Amman and the lively, energy-filled atmosphere at Champions has provoked such complimentary responses from pleased customers. The Amman Marriott and Management of Champions would like to thank all those members who made the Champions opening night such a smashing success. A promise to all members that Champions will continue to be a special place to come, consistently serving good food, good times and good sports! ■

Champions
AMMAN

Jumble

Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

KWONN
FYFAT
FLOAWL
HARTER



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

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Print answer here: ○○○○ ○○○○

Answers: How the owner met his customers at the 50% OFF sale — HALF WAY

Answers: KNOWN TAFFY FALLOW RATHER

Words of Wisdom

Opposition improves endeavors.

• • •

To be punctual is to keep your word.

• • •

Romance creates small fictions that make the truth easier to bear.

• • •

The first thing to fall to temptation is self-confidence.

• • •

Wealth becomes meaningless if there is not good health to enjoy it.

• • •

The mind can rust for a lack of use.

• • •

Humans are endowed with two ears, two eyes and only one tongue, which explains why they should endeavor to hear and see more than they speak.

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Lebanon

By Rana Ramzi Khoury
Age: 11,
The New English School.

In Lebanon
There are people dying, my
Friends are dying too,
There is nothing we can do, but with
Hope there's always might, so
Hope now, not later, later
Will be too late for them,
There is no peace nowhere,
No how,
Why? why is this happening?
Is it because they don't care
About them, about others
Oh Lebanon fight with might
Be mighty, be strong and fair,
There are no other words I can
Say of how much I care, and
Want you to be there, the young
Ones are dying, it's still too
Early for them to die, we'll be
There with love and care

Le Jourdain

Supplément en français du Star

Un pèlerinage sous haute surveillance

●Plus de deux millions de personnes sont attendues cette année pour le pèlerinage annuel à La Mecque (notre photo), soit 500 000 de plus qu'en 1995.
Un flot de pèlerins qui oblige les autorités saoudiennes à prendre de nombreuses mesures de sécurité. L'arrestation à la frontière jordanienne au mois de mars d'un Saoudien transportant 38 kilos d'explosifs a en effet réveillé la crainte des attentats. En 1989, deux bombes avaient fait un mort et seize blessés.
Toutes manifestations ou publications politiques sont strictement interdites à l'occasion de ce rassemblement religieux, un règlement que l'Iran essaie d'enfreindre chaque année depuis la révolution islamique de 1979. En 1987, la répression d'une manifestation iranienne avait fait 402 morts, selon un bilan officiel.



Le Jourdain présente ses meilleurs voeux à ses lecteurs pour l'Aïd Al-Adha. A cette occasion, le Star ne sortira pas le jeudi 2 mai. Vous pourrez retrouver notre journal et sa page en français le lendemain.

SELON MOI

Le tourisme en Jordanie, comme partout, offre une ouverture sur le monde qui apporte avantages et inconvénients. S'il est très intéressant financièrement pour le pays, il joue malheureusement un rôle important dans la transmission de maladies contagieuses, et particulièrement dans le développement du sida.

Cette maladie a connu une inquiétante augmentation en Jordanie juste après la guerre du Golfe. Les grands sites touristiques du pays accueillent chaque année plus de touristes venant découvrir les anciennes civilisations. Des touristes qui amènent dans leurs ba-gages d'autres moeurs issues de sociétés différentes.

Les jeunes de Jordanie qui ont rarement l'occasion de sortir avec une fille en raison des contraintes de la société rêvent de passer un peu de temps avec une étrangère. Une opportunité qui s'offre alors parfois à eux.

Tout cela ne mériterait pas que l'on s'y intéresse si la menace mortelle du sida n'existait pas. Or, ici, le spectre du sida ne semble pas être pris au sérieux et malheureusement, beaucoup de jeunes ignorent jusqu'au nom de cette maladie qui dévaste le monde. Cela tient bien sûr au manque d'infor-mations qui entraine un certain désintérêt chez les jeunes. Ils pensent que ce mal ne les concerne pas. Mais ignorer les causes de cette maladie, c'est al-ler vers elle les bras ouverts.

C'est pourquoi s'impose le besoin de sensibiliser les gens et de prendre des mesures pour diminuer les risques. Comme le dit le proverbe, «prévenir, c'est guérir».

L'une des difficultés rencontrées en Jordanie pour lutter contre cette maladie est la persistance de tabous concernant le sexe. Un homme ou une femme qui souhaite faire un test de dépistage du sida redoute le regard des autres. Une pression de la société qui peut l'en dissuader. Ici, les gens refusent de parler de leur vie sexuelle.

Cette mentalité ne peut conduire qu'à amplifier le problème, car se réfugier derrière des tabous n'em-pêchera pas la catastrophe d'arriver.

En ce qui concerne la prévention, beaucoup de consignes sont données dans les centres médicaux ou les hôpitaux. Mais c'est avec les nouvelles générations, dans les écoles, que doit débuter cette prévention. Seuls les enfants peuvent changer quelque chose.

A condition que la maladie ne se soit déjà pas trop propagée. Les enfants représentent l'avenir et les prévenir, c'est les protéger.

Lutter contre le sida doit, dans ce pays aussi, devenir l'affaire de tous.■

Soûad Retiti Ennimer

Le Jourdain, on y revient
Tous les jeudis dans le Star
645380

Bassam Abou-Sharif

«Offrir une autre alternative que Hamas ou Fatah»

Longtemps porte-parole auprès des médias de Yasser Arafat, Bassam Abou-Sharif s'est retrouvé écarté de l'OLP en 1992. Il retrace dans un livre intitulé «Ennemis en terre promise» son combat politique depuis son premier engagement en 1963. Trente-trois années de lutte qu'il souhaite aujourd'hui poursuivre au sein d'une nouvelle formation politique.

Comment est née l'idée de ce livre?

Au début, Uzi Mahnaimi proposait d'écrire un livre commun sur l'assassinat d'Abou Jihad. J'ai proposé d'élargir l'idée: *au lieu d'écrire sur Abou Jihad*, je préférais écrire sur des étapes différentes de l'histoire de l'opposition israélo-palestinienne, en y glissant une touche humaine. L'idée était, je crois, une idée originale car c'était la première fois qu'un Israélien écrivait avec un Palestinien un livre de façon séparée. Lui a écrit sa version seul, et moi la mienne. C'est l'éditeur qui a rassemblé les deux parties.

Vous écrivez au début du livre à propos de votre père *«C'est un homme de paix. J'espère lui ressembler»*. Avez-vous aujourd'hui le sentiment d'avoir toujours été un homme de paix?

Je suis un homme qui croit aux principes d'Hegel. Hegel est le philosophe qui m'a le plus influencé. Il m'a appris que chaque journée apporte des choses nouvelles et qu'il faut les placer d'une manière *logique dans la mosaïque de la vie*. Pour moi la lutte qui a commencé avec des mitrailleuses et des balles s'inscrit dans une même démarche. C'est-à-dire que le pas de la lutte armée était une précondition pour arriver à lutte politique pour rétablir la paix. On ne peut pas dire que Bassam Abou-Sharif est passé d'un révolutionnaire à un homme de paix.

Etes-vous aujourd'hui toujours dans le cercle de Yasser Arafat?

Je suis en contact avec Yasser Arafat, chaque jour, pratiquement. Mais si la question posée concerne ma collaboration avec Arafat dans le travail, alors non. Je suis membre aujourd'hui d'organes législatifs, pas exécutifs. Au niveau de l'exécutif, je suis maintenant distancé.

Comment avez-vous vécu cette mise à l'écart de l'OLP?

Pour moi, c'était dur. J'étais un peu amer au début. Mais maintenant, *j'ai le sentiment* que c'était sûrement une bonne chose. La manière dont l'Autorité dirige les choses dans les territoires a suscité beaucoup de mécontentement parmi les Palestiniens contre elle. Et moi, je ne suis pas un membre de l'Autorité.

Remettez-vous en question la politique de Yasser Arafat?

Pour moi Arafat est un leader qui est très intelligent, pragmatique et nécessaire. Pourquoi nécessaire? Parce qui si les autres dirigeants étaient au sommet de l'organisation, nous n'aurions jamais pu réaliser le premier pas.

Cependant le fait que Yasser Arafat soit un leader indispensable est une chose, mais sa façon de gérer le processus en cours en est une autre. L'accord d'Oslo pouvait être meilleur, pas seulement pour les Palestiniens mais pour la sauvegarde du processus de paix. Par exemple, *il y avait un point très* important: c'était celui des colonies israéliennes. A l'époque, j'avais discuté la nécessité d'inclure ce point dans l'accord d'Oslo, parce que pour moi, c'était très clair que si on ne l'incluait pas, ce point-là allait être dans le futur une bombe à retardement. Pas contre les Palestiniens seulement mais contre les Israéliens et le processus de paix. Et j'ai dit que les colons allaient former leurs armées et lutter contre le gouvernement israélien.

Vous vous qualifiez à la fin du livre d'«incurable optimiste». L'êtes-vous toujours en ce qui concerne le processus de paix avec le bouclage des territoires?

Je n'ai aucun doute en ce qui concerne la réussite du processus de paix. Mais c'est toujours comme une femme qui accouche: il y a la douleur, les cris, le sang, mais finalement, le bébé arrive et pousse le cri *du futur*.

Vous vous êtes rendu dans les territoires autonomes juste après les élections du mois de janvier. Quel jugement portez-vous sur ce scrutin?

Je considère que les élections qui ont eu lieu dans les territoires ne représentent pas un processus démocratique réel. Mais j'ai demandé à tout le monde d'aller voter car c'est une bonne expérience que d'aller voter. Pour avoir le sentiment de participer à l'administration des territoires.

Mais ce n'est pas la démocratie. Je crois que la Cisjordanie et la bande de Gaza n'étaient pas prêtes pour des élections démocratiques. L'absence d'une vie politique, d'un vrai pluralisme, de programmes, ont forcé les Palestiniens à voter d'une certaine façon, en fonction des tribus et non des idées. Le choix du peuple palestinien, c'est un choix entre Fatah et le Hamas. Mais il existe d'autres alternatives, des partis politiques démocratiques qui ont un programme pour le développement économique et social des territoires.

Est-ce que cela signifie que vous envisagez de revenir sur la scène politique au sein d'une nouvelle formation?

Je travaille pour cela. En fait je n'ai pas quitté l'arène politique, mais j'ai adopté un profil bas. J'écris, je rencontre des gens, je prépare avec d'autres collègues un projet de programme politique pour l'établissement d'un mouvement.

D'un côté il y a l'Autorité qui ne peut pas servir les intérêts du peuple et, de l'autre, le Hamas qui ne représente pas le peuple palestinien. Alors il y a une nécessité.

Vous étiez à Beyrouth lors de l'invasion israélienne de 1982. Quelle issue voyez-vous au conflit actuel?

C'est une discussion à haute voix entre Tel-Aviv et Damas, *qui se terminera probablement* lors d'une rencontre entre Assad et Peres. De la même façon, l'invasion de 1982 était le pas préparatoire pour accepter l'OLP comme représentant du peuple palestinien et pour négocier avec eux.

Propos recueillis par Joséphine Lama et Olivier Bras

«Ennemis en terre promise» chez Robert Laffont.
Disponible notamment en français, arabe ou anglais.

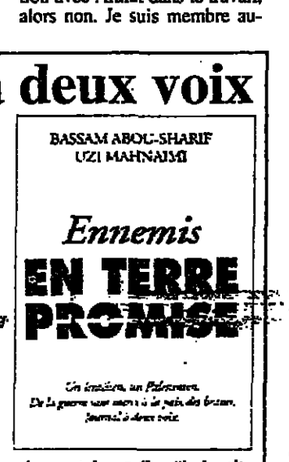


Bassam Abou-Sharif travaille aujourd'hui à la création d'un nouveau mouvement politique palestinien.

Un livre à deux voix

«Ennemis en terre promise» est un livre à deux voix. Celle de Bassam Abou-Sharif associé à celle d'un Israélien, Uzi Mahnaimi. Leurs deux vies, *ainsi* que celles de leurs parents et grand-parents, sont mises en parallèle. Deux itinéraires diamétralement opposés qui permettent de saisir la valeur de leur amitié actuelle.

Avant de se reconvertir dans le journalisme, Uzi Mahnaimi était maître-espion recruteur d'une unité secrète des renseignements militaires israéliens qui failli, notamment, abattre Yasser Arafat à Beyrouth en 1982. Dix ans après, il était le premier journaliste israélien à se rendre à Tunis pour interviewer le chef de l'OLP. Une rencontre possible grâce à la perspicacité d'Uzi Mahnaimi qui pendant les cinq ans qu'il a passés au journal Yediouth Ahronot n'a cessé de marteler qu'Israël devait négocier avec l'OLP pour signer la paix. Durant cette période, Bassam Abou Sharif et Uzi Mahnaimi ont souvent été en contacts, devenant peu à peu des amis. Ils ont choisi de raconter dans ce livre chacun les mêmes événements, vus à chaque fois du côté opposé.■



Portrait

«Le bon chemin, c'était la paix»

Si comme la plupart des grandes figures de la lutte palestinienne Bassam Abou-Sharif a sacrifié toute sa vie à ce combat, il a en plus payé physiquement cet engagement. Les premières pages d'«Ennemis en terre promise» décrivent comment le 25 juillet 1972 un livre piégé par le Mossad a failli lui coûté la vie. Il garde aujourd'hui de nombreuses séquelles de cet attentat, notamment une ouïe et une vue déficientes.

Paradoxalement, cet attentat a incité Bassam Abou-Sharif à ne plus recourir à la violence dans son combat politique. Connu mondialement au début des années 70 pour son rôle d'organisateur dans de nombreux détournements d'avions qui avaient pour but attirer l'attention internationale sur les revendications palestiniennes, il choisit alors une nouvelle voie: celle de la négociation. *«Il fallait que cette tuerie s'arrête un jour. Je le savais dans ma chair: la violence n'était pas la solution. Le bon chemin, c'était la paix».*

Cette nouvelle vision l'éloigne du FPLP, dont il est membre depuis sa création en 1967, pour se rapprocher de l'OLP. Il devient en 1987 un de ses conseillers.

Quelques mois plus tard, Bassam Abou-Sharif rédige un texte regroupant les dix points de la politique qu'il a définie avec Arafat. Sa publication dans certains journaux occidentaux déclenche un véritable tollé du côté palestinien. *«Les dinosaures de l'OLP jugeaient inadmissible ce que j'avais publié et considéraient ce programme comme une capitulation devant Israël. Mais pour ceux qui subissaient vraiment l'oppression israélienne, c'est exactement ce qu'ils réclamaient à l'OLP: un programme politique logique, pragmatique, qui correspondait aux besoins du peuple sur le terrain et conduirait l'Intifada vers un succès complet.»* Pour Uzi Mahnaimi, alors journaliste au quotidien israélien Yediouth Ahronot (voir encadré), *«cinq ans à l'avance, c'était l'accord d'Oslo presque mot pour mot.»*

Le rôle prédominant qu'il continue à jouer par la suite dans les négociations pour la paix ne suffit pas à l'intégrer véritablement à l'OLP dont il n'a jamais été membre. Et lorsque les pourparlers secrets entre la Norvège, Israël et l'OLP débutent en 1992, Bassam Abou-Sharif est écarté de la délégation de l'OLP. *«Tout bien considéré, je n'étais rien de plus qu'un conseiller indépendant d'Arafat. Ce qui avait garanti ma liberté d'action dans le passé faisait qu'aujourd'hui je me retrouvais hors jeu (...). Le temps était venu de m'écarter».*■

Olivier Bras

Conseil national palestinien

Yasser Arafat met la charte à l'amende

Le compte à rebours a commencé pour le Conseil national palestinien qui, réuni à Gaza, doit se prononcer sur l'amendement de la charte appelant à la destruction d'Israël. Une décision qui doit intervenir avant le 7 mai.

La ville de Gaza a accueilli dans son histoire récente plusieurs réunions historiques pour le peuple palestinien. En octobre 1948, cinq mois après la création de l'Etat d'Israël, un conseil palestinien se réunit à Gaza sous la présidence du grand mufti Haj Hussein et proclame le gouvernement de Palestine. C'est aussi à Gaza qu'a été créé le conseil législatif, en 1957, à l'époque du *mandat administratif égyptien*. Et en 1966, Gaza a accueilli la deuxième séance du Conseil national de l'OLP créée en 1964 par Ahmad Shouquiri.

La 21ème session du CNP vient de débuter. Pour la première fois depuis l'occupation en 1967, des membres de différentes tendances de l'OLP foulent le sol de leur patrie. Lundi, au centre Alshawa, le lieu du congrès, c'étaient les retrouvailles entre six membres, des observateurs et des invités. Beaucoup de larmes, beaucoup d'émotion.

C'est la première réunion du pouvoir suprême de l'OLP sur une terre palestinienne, rassemblant à la fois le Conseil national palestinien, «le parlement de l'exil» de l'OLP, et les députés palestiniens élus en janvier. Les dirigeants historiques n'en croient pas leurs yeux.

Mais quel est le prix à payer pour cette réunion? Sélim Zaanoun, président par intérim du conseil, a répondu à cette question dans son discours d'inauguration. *«La crise à laquelle nous sommes confrontés à propos de la charte est une crise psychologique. Le conseil doit se réunir et non pas s'abstenir sous prétexte de réaliser une exigence israélienne, que ce soit pour accepter ou refuser l'amendement de la charte. Nous allons écouter de tout notre cœur ceux qui disent que la charte est sacrée et qu'il ne faut pas la toucher, tout comme ceux qui disent que la charte est une loi qu'il faut aujourd'hui amender.»*



Yasser Arafat a invité le Conseil national palestinien à amender la charte palestinienne en vigueur «dans l'intérêt du peuple palestinien».

Quant à Arafat, il était plus bref et plus direct dans son allocution en déclarant d'emblée: *«Vous êtes invités dans l'intérêt national suprême du peuple palestinien à amender les articles de la charte qui vont contre la paix».*

Une première séance qui n'a duré qu'une heure en raison de l'absence de consensus entre les différentes branches de l'OLP qui, la nuit précédente, avaient déjà longuement abordé la question de l'amendement et dicuté de leur rôle au sein de l'OLP.

Le contexte dans lequel se tient ce conseil est lui aussi exceptionnel. Dans deux semaines, les discussions définitives sur le statut des colonies et de Jérusalem devraient débuter, alors que la bande de Gaza et la Cisjordanie subissent depuis deux mois un terrible blocus. Une session exceptionnelle, donc, appelée à prendre dans les jours à venir une décision historique.■

De Gaza, Hassan Balawi

Sept projets de nouvelle charte

Adoptée en 1968, la charte actuelle de l'OLP reprend la terminologie des mouvements de libération de l'époque. Elle exhorte les Palestiniens à utiliser la violence. *«La lutte armée est la seule voie pour la libération de la Palestine (...). Le peuple arabe palestinien affirme sa détermination totale à mener la lutte armée et à lancer la révolution populaire pour la libération et le retour dans sa patrie».* Elle condamne le sionisme dont elle juge les objectifs *«agressifs expansionnistes et colonialistes»*, en refusant de reconnaître la souveraineté du peuple juif: *«L'affirmation selon laquelle des liens historiques et spirituels unissent les Juifs à la Palestine n'est pas conforme aux faits historiques et ne correspond pas aux conditions requises pour constituer un Etat (...). Les Juifs ne forment pas un peuple avec une identité distincte.»*

Yasser Arafat, qui avait déclaré cette charte caduque en 1989, s'est engagé envers Israël à la modifier avant le 7 mai. Selon Selim Zaanoun, président par intérim du Conseil national palestinien, *«sept projets de charte ont été élaborés sur lesquels le CNP devra se prononcer.»*

Musique

Petite histoire de l'opéra français

L'opéra, qui a atteint en France son apogée au 19ème siècle avec certains grands compositeurs comme Georges Bizet, a du mal à séduire aujourd'hui le public français.

Les Italiens sont *non seulement les inventeurs* de l'opéra, mais ils demeurent indiscutablement les maîtres de cet art, qui, malgré sa complexité, est devenu un divertissement populaire.

En apprenant que les trois opéras les plus écoutés par les Italiens sont «Carmen», «La Traviata» et «Rigoletto», les Français peuvent être fiers de Georges Bizet, qui ne s'est pas contenté de rivaliser avec les grands, mais qui s'est glissé en tête du hit-parade de ceux qui ont enterré Mozart vivant.

Dans un but de ressusciter l'art dramatique grec, l'opéra est né au début du 16ème siècle. Mais il a fallu attendre plusieurs décennies pour qu'il devienne ce qu'il est actuellement: une forme musicale à laquelle s'ajoute un texte. C'est à Florence que le premier opéra, intitulé «Dafné», a été présenté en 1598. C'est en hommage à une Florentine, que, deux ans plus tard, un second opéra, «Euridice», est joué à Paris pour célébrer le mariage d'Henri IV et de Marie de Médicis.

En France, l'opéra est resté durant la première moitié du 17ème siècle réservé au Palais. Pendant ce temps, l'opéra comique est né en Italie et «l'art princier» est devenu un divertissement public.

A Paris, le Florentin Lully a développé l'opéra français en lui donnant un visage romantique, Rameau prenant ensuite la relève. «Ponome», le premier opéra en français, fut joué en 1671.

Au 18ème siècle, Florence a cédé la place à Venise puis à Naples. Le style français dominait les compositions de l'époque «tragédie-ballet-romantisme». Le 19ème siècle peut être considéré comme celui où l'opéra a connu sa vraie grandeur. Verdi était très influencé par Hugo et Dumas et par le style français en général. Tout comme Donizetti, Bellini a composé sa fameuse «Norma» d'après un livret français et les scènes de «La Bohème» de Puccini se passent au Quartier Latin. Sans oublier que Puccini a adapté «La Tosca» pour l'opéra après l'avoir vue au théâtre à Paris. Rossini, de son côté, a choisi de vivre la deuxième moitié de sa vie en France.

L'opéra «historique» est né à Paris durant cette période grâce aux Allemands Meyerbeer et Offenbach. Auber reste lui le compositeur français le plus productif et le plus influent de cette époque, tandis que l'ambitieux Berlioz cherchait à s'imposer.

La deuxième moitié du 19ème a vu se développer l'opéra lyrique grâce à des compositeurs français comme Gounod, Massenet et Saint-Saëns. D'autre part, un nouveau style est venu enrichir cette période féconde en faisant de l'amour et de la vérité le moteur essentiel de la plupart des œuvres. «Carmen», de Bizet (1875) est la meilleure illustration de cette nouvelle génération d'opéra.

La fin du 19ème siècle et le début du 20ème ont vu apparaître des compositeurs de talent comme Ravel, Poulenc, Charpentier et Debussy. Puis, petit à petit, le nombre d'admirateurs de cet art a diminué au 20ème siècle. Et aujourd'hui, seulement 3 Français sur 20 s'intéressent encore à cette musique jugée démodée que la jeunesse ignore presque.■

Suhail Al Sweis

C'est la vie

L'agenda français d'Amman

Cinéma

«La fille de d'Artagnan», une comédie de Bertrand Tavernier (1994) avec Sophie Marceau, Philippe Noiret,... Le 29 avril à 20h00 au Centre culturel français (CCF).

«Casque d'or», de Jean Becker (1952) avec Simone Signoret, Serge Reggiani,... Une chronique de la jeunesse d'après guerre dans le quartier de Belleville à Paris.
Le 6 mai à 20h00 au CCF.

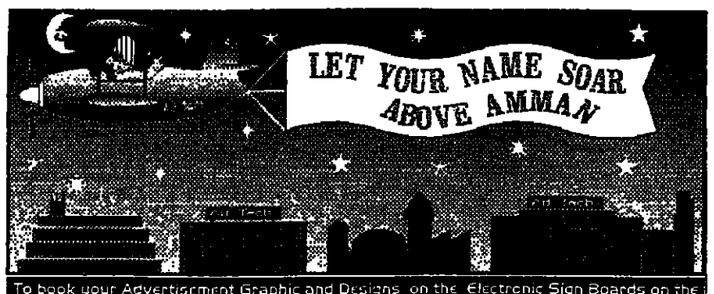


Peinture

Jusqu'au 30 avril, exposition au CCF des œuvres de Jean-Luc Gosse.

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Syrian Air	622147
United Airlines	641959
USAir	694801/2
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Aqaba Hotels

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Aqaba	314091
Aqaba Gulf Hotel	316636
Aquamarina I	316250
Coral Beach	313521
Holiday Int'l	312426
Miramar	314340

Important Numbers

Emergencies

Police	192/621111
Civil Defence H.Q.	193/198/199
Fire Brigade	622090/93
Ambulance	199
Blood Bank	775121
Traffic Police	625943/639703
Traffic Accidents	897467/8
Highway Police	787111

Hospitals

Akleh Maternity	642441/2
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Al-Bashir, Ashrafieh	775111/26
Al-Muasher Hospital	667227/9
Amal Hospital	674155
Army, Marka	891611/15
Hussein Medical Centre	813813
Italian-Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Khaledi Maternity	644281/6
Malhas, J. Amman	636141
Palestine, Shmeisani	664171/4
Queen Alia Hospital	602240/50
Shmeisani Hospital	607431
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/37
University Hospital	845845

General

Amman Municipality	843402
Electricity Complaints	121
Prices complaints	666181
Hotel complaints	08/53200
Sewerage Complaints	896390
Water Complaints	656390/91
Jordan Television	773111/19
Radio Jordan	774111/19
Post Office Info.	750981/2/3
Telephone Information	121

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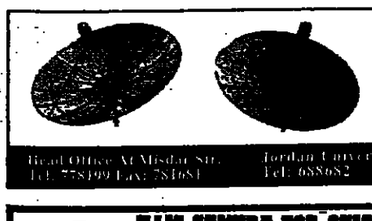
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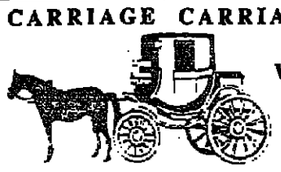

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THE STAR'S STATION
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COMPUTING & HIGH TECH
Edited by Zeid Nasser

Have you noticed:
Everyone is talking about the Internet and on-line services. The Workstation page is turning into the forum for these topics. Fax us on 648298 or email us at Star@NETS.com.Jo with your views. We and our readers want to know them.

A bi-lingual telephone book package that has more to it than meets the eye:

Comsoft PhoneBook 2.0

JORDANIAN SOFTWARE house, Comsoft, recently introduced version 2.0 of its telephone book utility, PhoneBook for Windows.

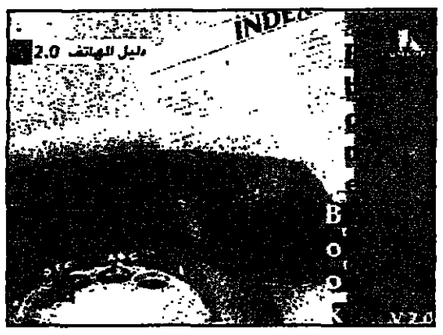
This is a flexible software package, that allows PC users to store records of full information, in Arabic or English, including first name, last name, telephones, faxes, addresses, and even mobile and pager numbers.

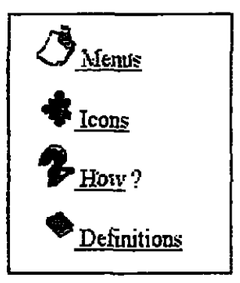
It's very much like a database. As a matter of fact it provides database features including different types of sorting of the data stored, for purposes of viewing or printing. A strong point in the PhoneBook's favour is its output features, allowing the user to print out to labels. This may come in very handy when performing mass mail-outs of invitations or seasonal greetings to clients and aquaintances.

"A smart option PhoneBook offers, that falls in line with the nature of official addressing in Arab countries, is the prefix and suffix system applied. Prefixes include 'Mr, Ms, Mrs, Dr, ..etc' while Arabic suffixes include *Al Mohtaram, Al Akram* and others. This is quite important for proper, formal addressing," commented Mr Marwan Ibrahim, marketing manager at Comsoft.

The manual is clear and offers a general look at the features of PhoneBook, providing the user with reasonable trouble-shooting tips. Seeing as there is a variety of options on offer, such as different views and numeric is information editing facilities, it's worth giving the manual a thorough look once the software is installed.

The installation itself is simple and straight to the point. It includes a protection sequence, and a neat un-install feature. This has been adopted by Comsoft to protect the user's rights, as the software only offers two installations. If need may arise for a third installation, the user can un-install to the key disk, winning back a previously used installation. It's a new technique, aimed at providing the licensed user of the software with multi-ple installations, yet limiting actual installations to just two.





PhoneBook's Help Menu, offers flexible features

PhoneBook offers an easy-to-use GUI, utilizing a side bar with elegantly drawn buttons for functions.

"It's a simple PhoneBook, but it includes a number of tricks such as bi-linguality (Arabic / English), and its *MDI Interface*," said Mr Sameer Mubarak, general manager of Comsoft.

For users interested in exporting their data compiled on PhoneBook to another database application, such as Access or FoxPro, there is a comprehensive "export feature that guides you through a number of easy steps, ensuring that you can utilize your PhoneBook data under other applications.

As for user's looking to import their data from other applications onto the PhoneBook, there is a limitation that you can only import files from the previous version of the PhoneBook. So, you will be using it as your basic data entry software, to later export the information onto something else.

System requirements for the PhoneBook are 4MB RAM, 2MB hard disk space. A modem is optional, if you want to utilize the automatic dialing feature. Comsoft offers the PhoneBook Version 2.0 for JD 20, and it is available in a variety of computer shops in Amman. For more information on PhoneBook, contact Comsoft at telephone 680713. ■

Microsoft announces release date for Arabic Windows 95 and Arabic Office 7.0

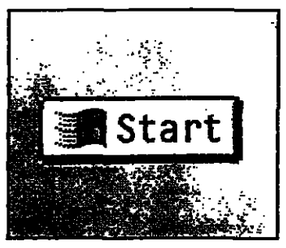
THE OFFICIAL release date for the keenly-awaited Arabic versions of Microsoft Windows 95 and Office 7.0 has been announced by the company after a period of market speculation and major reorganization within Microsoft's Arabic products development group.

Both new Arabic products will be released simultaneously in September at major launches in Dubai, Riyadh and Cairo, followed by roadshow presentations in the other Middle East business centers.

"We are delighted that we now have a firm date to go with and we thank our customers for their patience in waiting for Arabic Windows 95 and Office 7.0," said Ahmed Chami, newly-appointed general manager of Microsoft Middle East.

"It was very important that we announced a final delivery date that would be met without question before making this statement, and we have also constructed a very attractive upgrade package for customers buying existing Microsoft Arabic products," he added.

"Microsoft has completely reorganized the way in which it handles Arabic localization issues for the future and will expect to see Arabic versions of our core products coming quickly to the market, which is good news for our customers and for our channel partners."



Arabic Windows 95 starts this September

The announcement ends speculation in the market that the new localized versions that these packages would be available by the summer, which had been the tentative release date since last October.

Microsoft cited as reasons for the delay in delivering Arabic Windows 95 the fact the companies development group responsible for Arabic products had undergone major reorganization designed to bring localized products to the market much sooner in the future.

The company is encouraging customers who have delayed their purchase of localized Microsoft operating system (Arabic Windows for Workgroups) and applications packages (Arabic Office professional 4.3) to buy existing products in September.

While the localized version of Microsoft Office 7.0 is already complete, the beta version of the Windows 95 operating system was released to testers in March. Early reports cite very favourable feedback for the 32-bit operating system which has already sold over 20 million units worldwide. ■

An alliance against CD piracy in the Middle East

THE LATEST threat to the Middle East software industry is coming from pirates copying CD-Rom software. In response to this, the Business Alliance (BSA) has formed the Association Against Compact Disk Theft (AACT). The alliance includes a number of companies in the Middle East that produce commercial software and some leading companies that produce multi-media software.

The objective is to prevent the copying of CD software in the Middle East for export to East Asia, a rife piracy market.

The frightening thing about CD software is the huge amount of data which a compact disk can carry, making it possible to copy several commercial software packages onto one disk. The new alliance will also play a role in spreading more awareness among users and companies regarding the dangers and legalities involved with such an activity.

Jordanian software publishers interested in supporting this region-wide initiative can contact BSA Middle East in Dubai at telephone number ++ 971 4 513888 or ++ 9714 527444. ■

News update

IdealSoft designs the TAGI Web site

● Jordanian software publisher, IdealSoft, announced that it is responsible for setting-up and maintaining the Web site for Tala Abu Ghazaleh International (TAGI), the international accounting and auditing firm. TAGI benefited from the experience and technical know-how of IdealSoft's team in providing World Wide Web programming. The project represents on-going cooperation between IdealSoft and TAGI.

MIG gets Nintendo in Jordan

● Mirage Information technology Group (MIG) has been appointed as distributor for Nintendo products in Jordan.

The company will offer the complete range of Nintendo family entertainment products, including popular game systems such as the Super NES, GameBoy and others. Also, it will provide full accessories and games cartridges.

MIG already represents ALR in Jordan and also offers KFC monitors and other products.

For more information on Nintendo products in Jordan, contact MIG at telephone number 862808.

AST supports new Intel MMXO technology

● AST has announced that it will be supporting Intel's major architecture enhancement, designated MMXO technology, that will significantly boost multimedia performance.

Multimedia enhancements, which will be seen on the next generation of AST computers like the Advantage! will feature faster graphics, faster video, faster picture processing and faster music synthesis, thanks to Intel MMX architecture which accelerates multimedia and communication applications.

AST believes that MMXO technology will be embraced by graphics, audio and modem vendors and is expected to provide a strong source of computing power for new communication and multimedia applications.

The company plans to target several areas for MMX technology, including video conferencing, MPEG 2 video and DSVD speech compression. ■

INTERFACE
BY ZEID NASSER

Jordan's on-line community goes international, in *Newsweek*

THIS WEEK, Jordan's on-line community went international, owing to an article published by *Newsweek* on the debates and discussions which Jordanians, and foreign friends, engage in on the local Bulletin Board Service, NETS.

The story is as follows: A foreign reporter called Chris Dickey got a chance to witness the arguments raging on NETS. To his luck, members of the Royal family, who are NETS subscribers, take part in these arguments. The results are the makings of a story for the international press on how the Jordanian Royal family is interacting with other people in the country, on-line.

However, the relatively large space dedicated to the published article in *Newsweek*, and the details it goes into, mentioning names of several Jordanians involved and their on-line comments, presents a very interesting situation, whereby the whole world ends up reading about the issues, big and small, which we in Jordan are discussing electronically.

For starters, although the article presented unbelievable, worldwide publicity for NETS, even the officials at NETS think that it may have too many negative overtones.

"The article neglects to mention the democratic progress achieved in Jordan, as represented by the nature of discussions on NETS," says Mr Marwan Juma, general manager of NETS, whose comments are presented at length in the article.

"There is too much sensationalization in the article, like portraying most users on NETS as if they were opposed to peace, or uncivilized, which is not the case," adds Mr Juma.

Some users see the brighter side, though, commenting that, in spite of the negative comments in the article, it is really healthy to see Jordan mentioned in a special section on information technology and the Internet, in an international magazine, that could have covered so many other topics from any other parts of the world. Getting such a lengthy mention, is an achievement in its own right. The extent of the article's reach is massive.

The writer makes it quite clear throughout the article that the feeling he came away with from NETS was his fascination with the Royal family's involvement in an on-line service. To quote the article, "rarely have so many royals been so available, in fact, or so attentive, on computer forums anywhere."

Then, the writer launches into his own analysis of what he has seen on NETS, in terms of attitudes portrayed by Jordanians towards peace with Israel, reactions towards the recent bombings in Tel Aviv and he even discusses certain incidents of message-wars between NETS subscribers regarding local, political incidents. In conclusion, he finds that there is much 'flaming' going on

On the other hand, seeking to retain some balance, he brings in comments from Jordanian officials such as a spokesperson from the palace who commented on the nature of some arguments on NETS by saying that, "obviously it is not representative of everybody in Jordan." Another positive note sounded by the writer went as follows, " .. to the Hashemites' credit, the flaming was doused not with repression, but rhetoric." This is very true and presents credit to both members of the Royal family and everyone else involved in on-line discussions, because, at the end of the day, there is room to calmly discuss topics amongst one another. "The writer does not mention the very constructive discussions in conferences like 'Ask the Government', where any user can gain communication with a Minister of Government. Now that's progress *Newsweek* did not mention," concludes Mr Juma.

If you'd like to check out the article, look for the April 22 issue of *Newsweek*. It's funny to think that this article did just what was required of it. It made the magazine's sales in Jordan, leap last week. Apparently, sensationalism sells and, apparently, a country which just joined the Internet-proper last month can make headlines along with some of the most advanced nations in the world. It really makes you feel how much the Internet, and on-line services like NETS, have made the world a smaller place. It also sends out a clear message to us all: The world is watching. ■

UN moving toward the creation of an international criminal court

By John M. Goshko
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

UNITED NATIONS—The United Nations is moving slowly toward agreement on the need to create a permanent international criminal court to deal with genocide and crimes against humanity.

But human-rights activists complain that progress toward this goal is likely to come at the cost of what they see as severe limits on the proposed court's independence and effectiveness. And, these critics charge, the United States, a leading advocate of such a court, also is among the nations that want to limit its powers.

At issue is whether the international community needs a tribunal able to prosecute criminal acts arising from the alarming number of regional conflicts involving antagonistic ethnic groups that have broken out in the post-Cold War period.

The Security Council, prodded by the United States, created a special court at The Hague to deal with the atrocities spawned by "ethnic-cleansing" campaigns in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. But that court operates on a limited basis. Many governments and non-governmental rights advocates believe there should be a permanent judicial body to investigate and prosecute such crimes worldwide.

The proposed court would be separate from The Hague-based International Court of Justice, which also is part of the UN system, and which decides disputes between nations. The criminal court would follow to some degree in the footsteps of the Nuremberg war-crimes tribunals that tried Nazi war criminals following World War II.

A committee working on the outlines of the proposed court finished its deliberations here recently and will meet in August to complete a draft plan to be submitted to the General Assembly's annual fall meeting. If the assembly approves the draft, an international conference would be convened, perhaps as early as next year, to bring the new court into existence.

So far, though, there is no agreement about what the committee should recommend to the assembly. Nongovernmental groups concerned with human rights want the proposed court to have a broad mandate covering all types of "crimes against humanity."

How far an international tribunal can go in asserting jurisdiction is a major issue to governments concerned about infringement of their sovereignty.

Such countries as China, India and Singapore, which have shown extreme sensitivity to outside efforts to monitor their human-rights records, have argued that no international court should have the right to mix in their internal affairs.



An international criminal court is needed to stop atrocities like these which are committed by the Serbs against the Muslims in Bosnia

Such democracies as Canada, Germany, Sweden and Italy also have criticized aspects of proposals to give the court broad powers. And, to the dismay of rights advocates, many of these objections have been echoed by the United States, whose UN ambassador, Madeleine K. Albright, was an early advocate of a criminal court.

Washington and most human-rights groups part company over how far such a court should be able to go. The United States wants to limit the court's jurisdiction to violations of international humanitarian law and keep investigations for narcotics trafficking, terrorism and other international criminal conspiracies under the control of national governments.

Washington and most rights organizations also disagree about the relationship between the court and the 15-nation Security Council.

"Our view is that the Security Council is the body charged with ensuring international peace and security," a US official said. The US position is that the new court should initiate an investigation only if authorized by an individual government or by the Security Council. "US insistence on keeping the court under the Security Council means denying the court an independent prosecutorial role," said Richard Dicker, associate counsel of Human Rights Watch, a New York-based advocacy group. "It would confine the court to the periphery of international law and make its accountability for prosecuting genocide and crimes against humanity a permanent hostage to potential political interference."

That was a reference to the veto power of the council's five permanent members: the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China. Each country could use its veto to prevent a case from being referred to the court when its interests are affected. For example, China could block attempts to bring before the court charges of rights abuse in Tibet, which has been annexed by China.

However, US officials say making the court subordinate to the Security Council will not paralyze its ability to do its job. To make the court independent, these officials say, would detract from the primacy of the Security Council and create confusion about which UN organ has ultimate responsibility for international peace and security.

They also say many countries would refuse to co-operate with a court that is not answerable to any higher body. That is certain to become an issue in winning approval for US co-operation from Congress, whose conservative members are constantly on guard against what they perceive as attempts by the United Nations to encroach on US sovereignty. ■

Voters propel Italy into new political era

If the mathematics of winning was complex, the arithmetic of losing was straightforward. The Freedom Alliance of television magnate Silvio Berlusconi received 246 seats, a bruising loss.

By Daniel Williams
LA Times-Washington Post News Service

ROME—Voters have propelled Italy into a new political era, final election returns showed last Monday, choosing a center-left coalition to run the country and bringing the heirs of Italy's old Communist Party into government for the first time.

The Olive Tree coalition, headed by economics professor Romano Prodi, won 284 seats in the 630-seat Chamber of Deputies and will have a bare governing majority of 319 with the 35 seats held by the hard-line Communist Refoundation Party, which is not a formal member of the coalition. In similar fashion, the left won 167 seats in the 315-seat Senate. The narrow outcome was more decisive than had been anticipated in a country accustomed to rapid government turnovers brought on by parliamentary paralysis.

The coalition will form the country's 55th government in the 51 years since World War II. Its victory marks a major departure from the centrist and center-right forces that dominated Italy through much of that period.

The organizing principle of postwar Italian politics—keep the far left out of power at all costs—has given way to new realities: Italy's traditional centrist parties have all but dissolved, and meanwhile most of the Communists have been reshaped and revised into something much more like mainstream Social Democratic parties elsewhere in Europe.

The Democratic Party of the Left, as the former Communists have been known since 1990, rejects Marxist ideology and prescriptions.

The results mean formation of a government that will try to provide a soft landing for Italian society in the face of government budget cuts, which are required both to reduce the country's excessive debt and satisfy strict European Union demands for joining a proposed continent-wide currency plan.

The Olive Tree, with its slow-motion approach to spending cuts, sold itself as the party of stability against a more free-market solution favored by the right wing. "Italy wants serenity," Prodi, the prime minister-elect, said Monday.

Italy already suffers from high unemployment, particularly in the south, and cuts in social spending could reduce a safety net of jobs and benefits that help keep thousands of families afloat.

"There were problems that have built up over time and can no longer be kept on the shelf," Prodi said in a brief interview. "Otherwise, they could explode out of control at some point."

The election results break a long-standing psychological barrier here. For years it seemed that Italy was a fundamentally conservative country, fearful of atheistic leftists represented by the Communists and loyal to pious, if corrupt, local politicians.

Now, members of the Democratic Party of the Left will hold key posts in government, and the overall coalition will need the outside support of unrepentant Marxists of the Communist Refoundation Party to maintain a slim majority in the lower house of Parliament.

If the mathematics of winning was complex, the arithmetic of losing was straightforward. The Freedom Alliance of television magnate Silvio Berlusconi received 246 seats, a bruising loss. Berlusconi had surged to power two years ago pledging to apply his entrepreneurial magic to a new Italy.

Monday, the magic was gone. Abandoned by the Northern League regionalist party, which took many of its seats in northern Italy, Berlusconi's alliance ran second to the Olive Tree-Refoundation juggernaut throughout the country. The Northern League took 59 seats.

Berlusconi gave taped interviews to explain his alliance's defeat. It was the fault of votes going to former allies, the Northern League and the neo-fascist Social Movement—Flame Party, he declared, promising to lead the parliamentary opposition.

His main coalition partner, Gianfranco Fini of the rightist National Alliance, said, "We will be in the opposition without extremism but also without indulgence."

The Northern League, which alternately preaches federalism and secession, seemed a victim of its own success in attracting protest voters. Ballots split between the League and the Freedom Alliance made it possible for the Olive Tree to take several seats in the populous, wealthy Lombardy region. The League had hoped to hold the balance of power.

Initial euphoria among leftist politicians and supporters long starved for power was dampened a bit by the question of whether Italy, with its cluttered landscape of political parties, entrenched and bloated bureaucracy and loose civic devotion of citizens, is indeed governable.

Prodi, a moderate Roman Catholic who was nominated to attract centrist votes, called for constitutional reform that would simplify voting and nurse the country toward a two-party system. "We have a program to unite the Italians," he said, looking almost sheepish amid the glare of TV lights and thrust and parry of microphones. ■